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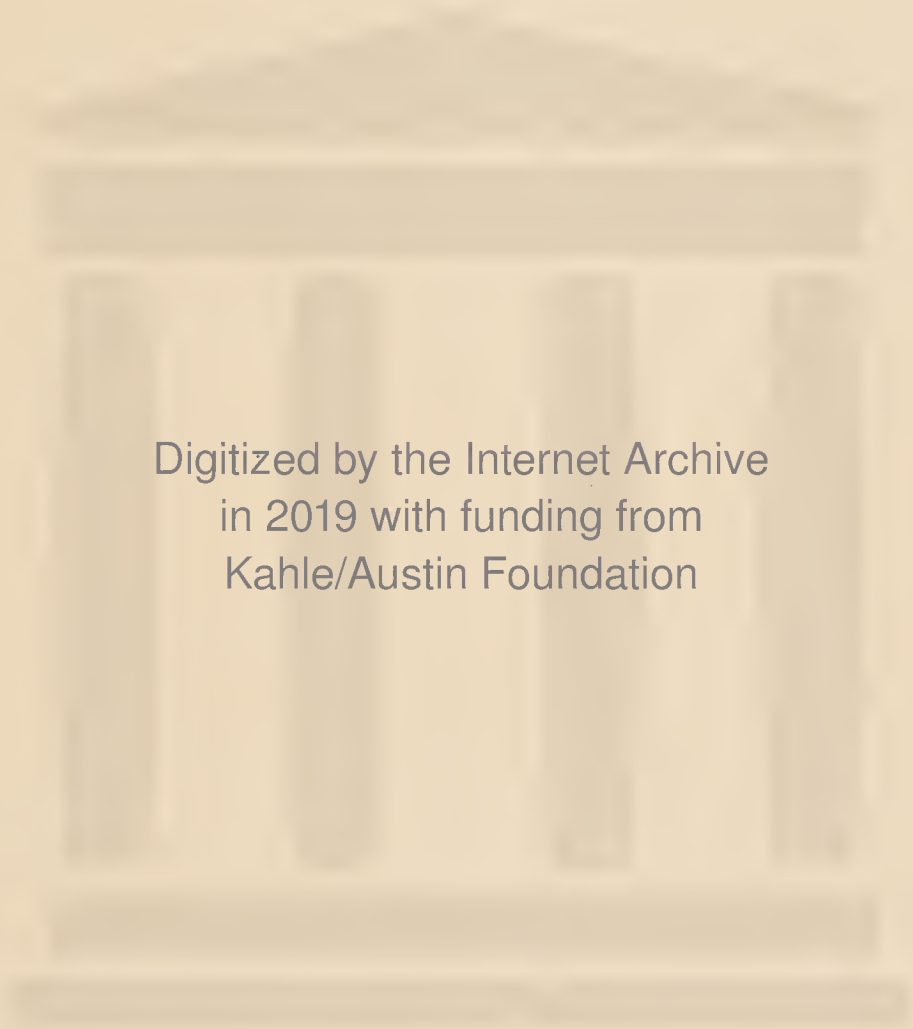

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NITYASUMAṄGALĪ

Nityasumaṅgalī

DEVADASI TRADITION IN SOUTH INDIA

SASKIA C. KERSENBOOM-STORY

MOTILAL BANARSIDASS
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To
THE GURU and
THE SAṂPRADĀYA

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Space: 'space conceived and lived'; The temple; Temple-ground and object of ritual performance; Its symbolism
Time: Daily ritual; Festival ritual; Meaning of ritual time: Cycle of the year and Cycle of the festival performance
Drama: Textual basis; Types of worship: motivation and evaluation; Structure of daily and festival worship: *Nityārcanā*; *Naimittikārcanā*
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PREFACE

"Utter the word, and your tongue will be set on fire", with this warning parents instructed their children at the beginning of our century to keep a safe distance from the devadasis and their community. Now, the tide has turned, and the devadasis are rapidly becoming an object of romantic reminiscences of the past. No doubt, the topic is still enigmatic and controversial, even today. Actually, the tradition of the devadasis forms an intimate aspect of Hinduism that is little noticed, known and understood by outsiders.

This study does not aim to give a sociological, historical or philological description of this phenomenon. It rather attempts to understand it from within the Hindu tradition. This perilous approach has followed three roads: 1. textual study of mainly Sanskrit and Tamil sources, 2. practical training in the performing arts of the devadasis and study of the underlying aesthetic theories, and 3. field-work: living in a Hindu family, participating in their rites and rituals, and a long-standing, warm friendship with the informants. This method induced me to abandon my initial view of the devadasis as 'sacred artists' and led to the formulation of the concept of the devadasi as a *nityasumaṅgalī*: an ever-auspicious female. This concept forms the hypothesis of this study and provides the title for this publication.

The present monograph is based on my Ph.D thesis which was completed under the guidance of Prof. Dr. Kamil V. Zvelebil and accepted in 1984 by the University of Utrecht. However, my involvement in the devadasis dates back to 1975 when I witnessed for the first time the festival of Ārudra Darśanam held in the great temple of Tiruvarur. This festival left an ineffaceable impression on my mind and sensibilities, as the dramatic force of Hinduism revealed itself in full splendour. In that year, too, Smt. Nandini Ramani, daughter of Dr. V. Raghavan and student of Smt. T. Balasarasvati since 1958, commenced my training in Classical Bharata Natyam. This road I followed ever since.

It is with a feeling of deep gratitude and of profound sadness that I realise that the basis of my acquaintance with living Hindu tradition was laid by three representatives of the "old world", each great in their own way, whose demise marks the end of an entire era; an era that cannot be perpetuated since the surrounding world has changed too much to appreciate their greatness. The immense scholarship of Dr. V. Raghavan, his kindness in teaching me, the hospitality and generosity of a true aristocrat and devotee, Tiru V.S. Tyagaraja Mudaliar, and the uncompromising involvement of the great artist Smt. T. Balasarasvati: they leave us no successor of their magnitude.

The gift of knowledge (*vidyādāna*) is the most precious one to receive; especially in our times. Therefore I express with deep gratitude my indebted-

ness to all my teachers in Europe, especially to Prof. Dr. J. Gonda, to Mrs. Dr. S. Gupta, and to Mrs. Dr. E. te Nijenhuis. The largest debt I owe to my *guru* and promotor Prof. Dr. K.V. Zvelebil: to him scholarship is a matter of truth, art, and of life itself. A lesser involvement he has never accepted from his students. For this demand I am infinitely grateful.

In India I thank my teacher Smt. P. Raṅganāyakī Cunnan who has made me the heir of her family tradition; Smt. Nandini Ramani who does not only train me in Bharata Natyam but also in the *ācāram* (ritual propriety) and common sense of Hindu life; her family-in-law and her mother who have accepted me for months as a member of their household; Sri and Smt. T. Sankaran whose help has always proven to be the 'magic link'; and all the informants who have willingly shared their knowledge with me; as well as music-master Sri B. Krishnamoorthy and dance-master Sri K. Ganesan.

Finally, I realise that the task of describing the *devadāsī saṃpradāya* is beyond a single individual. My only hope can be that this initial step on a long road to follow will be received by the reader in a spirit of generosity.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AA	Ajitāgama
Ak.	Akanāṉūṟu
A.R.E.	Annual Reports Epigraphical Department of the Archaeological Survey Southern Circle
B.N.R	B.N. Rājalakṣmī
comm.	commentary
DED	Dravidian Etymological Dictionary (1961) by T. Burrow and M.B. Emeneau
ed.	edition, editor
e.g.	exempli gratia
ff.	further
ftn.	footnote
IA	Indo-Aryan
IMP	Inscription of the Madras Presidency
JAOS	Journal of the American Oriental Society
JMMA	Journal of the Madras Music Academy
JTS	Journal of Tamil Studies
KKJ	Kriyākramajyōti
KT	Kumāratantra
Kuṟ.	Kuṟuntokai
Kuṟiñ.	Kuṟiñcippāṭṭu
lit.	literally
LM	Letchappa Manuscript
Mal.	Malaipaṭukaṭāṃ
Mat.	Maturaikkāñci
Naṟ.	Naṟṟiṇai
NŚ	Nāṭyaśāstra
p.	page
Patiṟ.	Patiṟṟuppattu
Per.	Perumpāṇāṟṟuppaṭai
Por.	Porunarāṟṟuppaṭai
Poruḷ.	Poruḷatikāram of Tolkāppiyam
PPVM	Puṟapporuḷveṇpāmālai
P.R.	P. Raṅganāyakī
P.R. Th.	P.R. Thilagam
Puṟ.	Puṟanāṉūru
s.	sūtra
SKS	S. Kersenboom-Story

Skt.	Sanskrit
SM	Subburatnammā Manuscript
ŚS	Śrīpraśnasaṃhitā
Ta.	Tamil
Te.	Telugu
TL	Tamil Lexicon
Tol.	Tolkāppiyam
trans.	translation, translated by, translator
V.N.	V. Naṭarāja

NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION AND TRANSCRIPTION

Transcription

The transcription used for Tamil words of texts, music and dance compositions, is based on a strict transliteration according to the system adopted by the Tamil Lexicon (Madras University). In the case of personal names we have followed the transcription chosen by the person him/herself, e.g. Smt. P.R. Thilagam instead of Ta. Tilakam or Skt. Tilaka. If there was no written record of the person's choice, we have preferred to transcribe the name as literally as possible either in the Tamil version, e.g. R. Kaṇṇaṉ, or in the Sanskrit version, e.g. P. Raṅganāyakī. Names of political persons have been rendered in anglicised version. Some terms have posed us for problems which, in certain cases, we have refused to solve: the term *rudrakkaṉṉikai* is composed of the Skt. *rudra* (Ta. *iruttira*) and the Ta. *kaṉṉikai* (Skt. *kanyakā*); a consequent transcription should therefore be either *iruttirakkaṉṉikai* or *rudrakanyakā*. However, we have preferred to employ the mixed form as it is used with a specific meaning in the pertinent context. Place names follow mostly the anglicised version, e.g. Tanjore instead of Tañcāvūr. In case of small places we have adhered to a transliterated form without adding the diacritical markers, e.g. Tirukalukkunram. Caste-names have been given in anglicised version, except where part of a personal name. The names of gods have in most cases been transliterated from either Tamil or Sanskrit; in the case of Śiva, Viṣṇu and Śakti we have preferred Siva, Vishnu and Sakti; this choice has been motivated partly by the mode of publication of this work. This holds as well for often recurring terms like devadasi, Agamas and Vedas.

Transliteration

The following Roman letters are used for the Tamil characters: Vowels : a, ā; i, ī; u, ū; e, ē; o, ō; ai; au. The same holds for Telugu characters; Sanskrit does not employ ē and ō but adds ṛ, ṝ and ḷ, ḹ.

Consonants (Tamil)

	Lips	Teeth	Ridge upper	behind teeth		Hard palate	Soft palate
Stops	p	t			ṭ	c	k
Nasals	m	n	ṉ		ṇ	n	n
Liquids			r	l	ḷ		
			ṟ		ḻ		
Semivowels	v					y	

Consonants (Sanskrit and Telugu)

	Voiceless Stops		Voiced Stops		Nasals
	Unaspir.	Aspir.	Unaspir.	Aspir.	(voiced)
Velars	k	kh	g	gh	ṅ
Palatals	c	ch	j	jh	ñ
Cerebrals	ṭ	ṭh	ḍ	ḍh	ṇ
Dentals	t	th	d	dh	n
Labials	p	ph	b	bh	m

Semivowels (voiced)	y	r	l	v
Sibilants (voiceless)	ś (palat.)	ṣ (cerebr.)		s (dental)
Aspirate (voiced)	h			
Secondary phonetic symbols	ḥ	ṃ		◌̆

INTRODUCTION

"Can a devadasi wear toe-rings ?"
"Of course ! She is a *nityasumaṅgalī* !"

The moment our mind is for the first time impressed by a cultural phenomenon, we often attempt to investigate it accordingly. The observer cannot help possessing a distinct cultural consciousness based on his own cultural milieu. It is very difficult to perceive, let alone to absorb, an idea which is totally alien to our own modes of thought. In doing so it takes a great effort to achieve that state of mind which is open, and impressible, on the one hand, and on the other hand, analytical in sorting out the mode of this new thought.

The phenomenon of the devadasi (Skt. *devadāsī*, Ta. *tēvatāci*, lit. 'slave of god'), has suffered greatly from faulty, culture-bound evaluations. The present monograph does not aim at judging these earlier evaluations[1], nor does it claim to give a 'truly objective' description of *what* the devadasi tradition *was*; it rather tries to follow the inherent mode of thought, namely, *what* the devadasi tradition *meant* within the frame of Hinduism, and its *transformation* into a living cultural phenomenon functioning significantly in the context of the Hindu tradition. In short, this is not the study of the *fact* of the devadasi tradition, but of its *meaning* and the *mode of production* of that meaning.

Sources

This study is based both on textual sources, mainly in Sanskrit, Tamil and Telugu, and on fieldwork conducted in 1977-1978, 1980-1981 and 1982-1983, comprising visits to many South Indian temples, living for months in an orthodox Hindu family as well as "sitting at the feet' of former devadasis. The multitude of do's and don't's in the life of an orthodox Hindu and the cultural evaluations employed by them gave rise to the basic hypothesis for this work which can be summed up in a single definition: 'The devadasi is a *nitya-su-maṅgalī*. i.e. an *ever-auspicious woman*'.

It was the casual answer to the question[2] quoted above which transformed the data gathered from textual sources and informants into a meaningful whole. A combination of the intuitive appreciation of the dramatic powers of living Hinduism, and my earlier training both in theory and in the practice of dance, gave rise to a 'frame of understanding' which revealed a 'temperament' that imparted sense to the data gathered thus far. The perception of this 'temperament' was, however, the incentive for several years of further research, questioning and testing the basic hypothesis. In course of time

this search led me to the acquaintance with a theoretical base surprisingly similar to my initial attempts at unravelling the cultural phenomenon of the devadasi tradition.

As it is, this work combines intuition and scholarship, textual study and field-work.[3]

Methodology

a. Semiotics as a "science dedicated to the study of production of meaning in society" investigates the cultural 'sign' as a "two-faced entity, linking a material *vehicle* or *signifier* with a mental *concept* or *signified*".[4] In our case the devadasi is very much a *signifier* expressing a *signified* in the form of her art and role in society. Mukařovský identifies the work of art as "the semiotic unit whose signifier is the work itself as 'thing' (....) and whose signified is the 'aesthetic object' residing in the collective consciousness of the public".[5] Similarly the devadasi herself is a very expressive *semiotic unit* signifying the mythical-aesthetic-*cum*-ritual object residing in the collective consciousness of Hindu tradition. The insights quoted above have been derived from semiotic speculation about the theatrical process of drama. Anyone familiar with living Hinduism will be struck by the dramatic modes of expression of this tradition. The myths, the complex rituals, the colourful customs and festivals aim at a form of cultural transmission that is not based on analytic rationalism, but on imagination and poetic feeling. It is therefore not surprising that Hinduism has produced thinkers like Abhinava Gupta (993-1015 A.D.) who equated aesthetic experience with mystical experience, and saw aesthetic rapture as the mystical experience of bliss.[6] The dramatic susceptibility of Hindu mind is indeed pronounced; in fact, it is the most obvious manifestation of the cultural 'temperament' mentioned above. It stretches beyond drama proper, and, as such, interprets the entire life in terms of mythical poesis. The semioticians define theatre and drama as something which lies outside ordinary social life, a situation which holds probably for the modern, Western world: "The stage radically transforms all objects and bodies defined within, bestowing upon them an overriding signifying power which they lack—or which at least is less evident—in their normal social function."[7] Or, as Jiří Veltruský put it: "All that is on the stage is a sign."[8] In a culture where the cultural consciousness moves mainly in realm of mythico-poetical thinking, *every* facet of life is touched by this 'magic finger' of dramatisation, *all* is a stage and *all* is a *sign*. It is the 'drama of tradition' that is 'played' by and for the members of the traditional society.

b. The second theoretical pillar for the present treatment of the devadasi tradition follows the investigation of cultural phenomena *sub specie ludi*[9], the *sacer ludus* being traditional Hinduism. According to Huizinga, it is in myth and ritual that the great instinctive forces of civilized life have their origin rooted in the primeval soil of play.[10] He distinguishes four basic characteristics of play which will prove to be of great interest to us in studying the devadasi tradition.

1. Play is voluntary activity, it is free, in fact it is freedom. Hinduism as such can be understood as a voluntary expression of Indian culture; this, in contrast to forced conversions to other religions than the indigenous. (2) Play is not "ordinary" or "real life". Connected with this aspect is the disinterestedness of play. Huizinga admits, though, that there are different degrees of intensity and devotion in play. It may proceed with the utmost seriousness, with an absorption and a devotion that passes into rapture and that, temporarily at least, completely abolishes the consciousness of play being "only a pretend". Here we may remind ourselves of the fervent devotion of *bhakti* movements, the supreme seriousness of the officiating priests during the ritual, and the aesthetic theory crediting aesthetic experience with mystical truth.[11] As we saw before, to a cultural consciousness that moves mainly in the realm of mythico-poetical thinking, all is a stage and all is a sign. Indeed, the ultimate aim of the Hindu is not to 'earn his living' by his participation in the *sacred play* of Hinduism, but to reach that total absorption in his *sacer ludus* that does not last temporarily—as in ordinary play—but eternally (*mokṣa*, liberation from the chain of rebirths). In essence his participation is disinterested; although Hindu ritual worship knows two aims: *bhukti,* i.e. physical well-being and material gain, and *mukti*, i.e. liberation, on the whole the notion that every worship results in *puṇya,* i.e. auspiciousness which ultimately leads to happiness and liberation, is strongly felt. In its all-embracing temperament Hinduism can be interpreted as a perpetual play transforming the "ordinary life" unintermittently into a *sacer ludus*, a holy dramatic interpretation, actualised incessantly in a macro-theatrical performance, and spreading its theatrical mode of signification over the entire culture. (3) Play is played out within certain limits of time and space. Here we find the *raison d'être* for the meticulous division of time-cycles as described in chapter II, as well as the transformation of space into 'sacred space' both in the open village area and in the temple territory. The limitation in time leads to the rise of intentional repetition which develops into tradition. The limitation of space leads to the well-guarded 'play-ground' containing an absolute and peculiar order. This is another very positive feature of play: it creates order, it *is* order. Connected with the third characteristic of limitation in time and space is the fourth characteristic that every play has its rules. "No scepticism is possible where the rules of a game are concerned, for the principle underlying them is an unshakable truth."[12] Indeed, as soon as the rules are transgressed the whole play-world collapses. The game is over. The spell is broken and sets "real" life going again. In this respect it is meaningful to draw attention to the many rules and distinctions of ritual purity, the anxiety with which they are observed, and the utter uncompromising indignation at overstepping these rules of ritual propriety. If only for a moment the temple has been entered by a person in the state of ritual impurity the entire shrine must be purified and sanctified anew. Any contact with persons in ritually impure state requires a head-bath.[13] The overt trespasser and the cynic are unacceptable to the

play-community since their withdrawal from the rules of the play reveals the relativity and fragility of the play-world. Therefore, they must be cast out. Much more acceptable than the cynic, the 'spoil-sport', is the 'false-player'. The latter's 'false behaviour' may be ignored, forgiven or redressed. He need not be cast out as he does not break the magic circle of the play-world. As a result of the rules accompanying any play, and the inacceptance of any cynicism, play-communities arise, traditions within traditions, castes within castes, each performing a drama that is valid for them only. The rise of these permanent play-communities with their own customs can be seen as the fifth characteristic.

When we apply these five characteristics of play to the *sacer ludus* of Hinduism, in which the devadasi had her effective role, it is not surprising that the modern world has disrupted the tradition of temple dance and music. The problem which expressed itself so flamboyantly in the case of the devadasis belongs in fact to the larger sphere of devotional Hindu temple worship. The reasons for this decay are manifold but can be divided into two main *foci*: the internal and the external causes. Precisely because of the incapacity to accept cynicism in the process of devotional performance, the tradition is crumbling with the advent of modern times. The poetical function which devadasi participation had in the temple-ritual and in society, was unable to reformulate itself in the temperamentally changed context.[14] The external cause can be found in the drastic political changes, which led in the first place to the rupture of the traditional social organization. Traditionally a balance was struck between the king, who ruled like a feudal lord and patron, and the powers of religion. All arts and sciences prospered under the wings of the temple, generously supported by the king. On the other hand, the king's "holy strength", i.e. to be victorious, maintain peace within his own territory, enhance rain and rich crops, was sustained by the temple-priests through ritual and by the devadasis, who served in many cases both the temple and the court by their ever-auspicious presence and arts. All this is no more. The modern world, even in India, becomes more and more the world of pragmatic cynicism. So far Hinduism has been able to incorporate practically all foreign influences into its tradition. The crisis which presents itself now is far deeper than it has even been before. It turns into a 'spoil-sport' of the first order. And, as it seems, the poesis of devotional ritualism is likely to suffer as one of the first.

Application

The aim of this monograph is to investigate the poesis which gave rise to the necessity of the phenomenon of the devadasi, and the semiosis that translated this underlying poetic idea into meaningful signs that constituted the devadasi tradition within Hindu culture, as well as these signs in themselves as represented by the traditional tasks of the devadasis in the temple ritual in Tamilnadu.

In order to be able to do so we will have to turn away from the present

state of Hindu temple worship to those periods in the cultural history of South India when this mythico-poetical universe was still intact. This cultural-historical context will be dealt with in chapter one, which will show that the devadasi phenomenon is older than her appearance in the temple, and is based on a concept that can be found at all levels of society and culture throughout historical times.

The specific 'dramatic content' of the phenomenon of the devadasi as a temple dancer and singer is dealt with in chapter two where her role within the structure of temple ritual is described in detail. We will see that the 'plot' of the ritual drama is basically the balancing of two opposite forces: life-enhancing, fertile or 'auspicious' versus life-destroying, deadly or 'inauspicious'. These two forces must be combined in harmony; they are ever present, active, and cannot be destroyed, therefore they must be balanced. This message is transmitted through all channels available: through 'magical ritual', through mythology, staging mythological dramatis personae that represent these basic forces, and through careful composition of the ritual personnel. In this context the devadasi-*nityasumaṅgalī* was extremely important as a person who is guaranteed 'danger-proof': she should be present in those critical moments of balancing the auspicious and the inauspicious. She was to remove the accumulated destructive force of evil eye (*dṛṣṭi-doṣa*) which the god might have contracted during a procession, by waving the pot-lamp in front of him.

The ordinary female is transformed into a *nityasumaṅgalī* by a number of rites and is recognisable by a number of cultural markers (*lakṣaṇas*). These rites of passage are dealt with in chapter three which is based mainly on the accounts of devadasis who were attached to different temples in Tamilnadu until 1947 when the tradition of dedicating females to temples was legally forbidden (Devadasi Act).[15]

Scope

As a cultural phenomenon the devadasi is an expressive *semiotic unit* in the drama of the *sacer ludus* of Hindu ritual traditions. This approach may hopefully produce a coherent vision of what the devadasi tradition must once have meant. It precludes a strictly historical description of the origin, growth and spread of the phenomenon as well as its occurrence in the ancient world and in the entire Indian subcontinent.

As Sanskrit, Tamil and Telugu sources were accessible to the author, and as informants could be interrogated in Tamil, the study has been geographically restricted to Tamilnadu. There is however, no doubt that the phenomenon of the devadasi was once spread all over India, and that the performing arts of the devadasis throughout South India show a close relationship and mutual influence.

Notes

1. Abbé Dubois describes vividly his impressions of a procession of a temple-car in his *Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies*, Oxford University Press, Third Edition, First Indian impression, 1978, p. 604-5. We will quote this passage in full as an illustration of the individual interpretation and appreciation of a foreign cultural phenomenon: "The procession advances slowly. From time to time a halt is made, during which a most frightful uproar of shouts and cries and whistlings is kept up. The courtesans (i.e. devadasis, SKS) who are prcsent in great numbers on these solemn occasions perform obscene dances; while, as long as the procession continues, the drums, trumpets, and all sorts of musical instruments give forth their discordant sounds. On one side sham combatants armed with naked sabres are to be seen fencing with one another; on another side, one sees men dancing in groups and beating time with small sticks; and somewhere else people are seen wrestling. Finally, a great number of devotees crawl slowly before the car on hands and knees. Those who have nothing else to do shriek and shout so that the thunder of the great Indra striking the giants would not be heard by them. But in order to form a proper idea of the terrible uproar and confusion that reigns among this crowd of demoniacs one must witness such a scene. As for myself, I never see a Hindu procession without being reminded of a picture of hell".

2. This question was asked by the author of Dr. V. Raghavan in November 1977. The wearing of toe-rings marks the married status of women whose husband is alive. Such women are called *sumaṅgalīs* 'auspicious females'. At the event of the demise of the husband his widow will have to remove her toe-rings. In the case of the devadasi this very 'unlucky' sign will never have to be employed as she is married to an immortal, divine husband. Therefore she is called *nitya-su-maṅgalī* 'ever-auspicious female'. Although the status of devadasis has always been an enigma to the British administration, it posed no problem to the Hindus. From their point of view the devadasi was a married, auspicious woman, whose status and auspiciousness were lasting. This aspect of '*ever-guaranteed*-auspiciousness' marks the devadasi off from her *sumaṅgalī* sisters whose auspiciousness may cease any moment.

3. Cf. Fokkema, D.W. and Kunne-Ibsch, E., *Theories of Literature in the Twentieth Century*, London, 1979, p. 12. We believe with Ejchenbaum that "there are no ready-made sciences. The vitality of a science is not measured by its establishing truths but by its overcoming errors". The present work is based on the Ph.D. thesis accepted at Utrecht University on May 18, 1984. So far the main hypothesis of the devadasi as a *nityasumaṅgalī* has not been questioned. However, we realise that further elaboration of the semiotic process at work in this concept is not only possible but also desired. Such specialised treatment of the phenomenon can only be performed on the basis of a much broader, basic referential frame. This we hope to have presented here in the form of a first attempt to understand the complex cultural identity and importance of the devadasi.

4. Keir Elam, *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama*, New Accents, London, 1980, cf. p. 1-6ff.

5. Keir Elam, 1980, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

6. Cf. among others V. Raghavan and Nagendra, *An Introduction to Indian Poetics*, MacMillan, Madras 1970, p. 36-42, and, p. 75-82; cf. also E. Gerow, *Indian Poetics*, Wiesbaden, 1977, esp. p. 264-8.

7. Keir Elam, 1980, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

8. Keir Elam, 1980, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

9. J. Huizinga, *Homo Ludens, a study of the play element in culture*, The Beacon Press, Boston, 1955.

10. J. Huizinga, 1955, p. 5ff.

11. D.W. Fokkema and E. Kunne-Ibsch, *op. cit.*, p. 168. According to Umberto Eco (*Theory of Semiotics*, 1976): "the question of truth is excluded from the field of interest of Semiotic theory (....). Truth and falsity are important differentiations, but they belong to the realm of pre- or post- semiotic problems"; or, on p. 41 of the same work "..art is characterized by a 'third kind of truth', which has no direct relation with logical or empirical truth."

12. J. Huizinga, 1955, p. 11. However, emphatically not that type of truth which belongs to the domain of logic.

13. Cf. Louis Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus*, Paris, Gallimard, 1966 on the basic division between the ritually pure versus the ritually impure in the entire sphere of traditional Hindu life. Examples of ritually highly impure persons are: a recent widow, a menstruating woman, any person connected with funeral ceremonies, a barber, an outcaste or untouchable, formerly also a foreigner or non-Hindu.

14. The indifference of the former temple-dancers about the preservation of their artistic tradition is remarkable. To their mind, preservation makes no sense as the conditions that are required for a performance are no longer offered. Anyhow, "anyone can do anything nowadays"; as one of the informants remarked: "the old devadasis cannot compete with the 'new ones' that occupy the present stage".

15. The 'Devadasi Act' was passed on 26-11-1947; the full text is found in the archives of the Government of Madras, Law (legislative) Department, G.O. No. 23, January 26, 1948: Acts—The Madras Devadasis (Prevention of Dedication) Act, 1947, Publ. Madras Act. XXXI of 1947: "Whereas the practice still prevails in certain parts of the Province of Madras of dedicating women as "devadasis" to Hindu deities, idols, objects of worship, temples and other religious institutions. And whereas such practice, however ancient and pure in its origin, leads many of the women so dedicated to a life of prostitution; and whereas it is necessary to put an end to the practice; It is hereby enacted as follows: 1. (1) This Act may be called the Madras Devadasis (Prevention of Dedication) Act, 1947. (2) It extends to the whole of the Province of Madras. 2. In this Act, unless there is anything repugnant in the subject or context—(a) "dedication" means the performance of any ceremony, by whatever name called, by which a woman is dedicated to the service of a Hindu deity, idol, object of worship, temple or other religious institution, and includes '*pottukattu*', '*gajjepuja*', '*mudri*' and dancing by '*kumbhaharathy*'; (b) "devadasi" means any woman so dedicated; (c) "woman" means a female of any age. 3. (1) The dedication of a woman as a devadasi, whether before or after the commencement of this Act and whether she has consented to such dedication or not, is hereby declared unlawful and void; and any woman so dedicated shall not thereby be deemed to have become incapable of entering into a valid marriage. Nothing contained in this sub-section shall be deemed to affect the operation of section 44-A of the Madras Hindu Religious Endowments Act, 1926, or the rights to which a devadasi is entitled under that section. (2) Any custom or usage prevailing in any Hindu community such as the Bogum, Kalavanthulu, Sani, Nagavasulu, Devadasi and Kurmapulu, that a woman of that community who gives or takes part in any melam (nautch), dancing or music performance in the course of any procession or otherwise is thereby regarded as having adopted a life of prostitution and becomes incapable of entering into a valid mmarriage, and the performance of any ceremony or act in accordance with any such custom or usage, whether before or after the commencement of this Act and whether the woman concerned has consented to such performance or not, are hereby declared unlawful and void. (3) Dancing by a woman with or without *kumbharathy* in the precincts of any temple or other religious institution, or in any procession of a Hindu deity, idol or object of worship installed in any such temple or institution or at any festival or ceremony held in respect of such a deity, idol or object of worship is hereby declared unlawful." A penalty for dedication after November 26, 1947 was stipulated as follows: either six months imprisonment or a fine of Rs. 500,—or both for any person of the age of sixteen or more who dances in contravention of the provisions under section 3, subsection (3).

Chapter I

DEVADASIS IN THE CULTURAL HISTORY OF SOUTH INDIA

Introduction

> "It is estimated, and probably conservatively, that eighty per cent of the people of South India address their worship almost exclusively to minor, i.e. local and village deities, and yet these deities receive little attention in the studies of Hinduism." W.Th. Elmore, *Dravidian Gods in Modern Hinduism*, 1925, p. ix.

Introducing this chapter on the cultural history of the devadasis of South India, it seems a safe procedure to define first what this chapter is not intended to be. The subject of the devadasis can truly be called a 'slippery' subject. It touches on such a vast scale of human sciences and disciplines that a strict limitation of the field of interest, approach and methodology is the first prerequisite to remain in control of the material gathered in the course of investigation. It is very painful to have to leave aside many aspects of the phenomenon of the devadasi which would prove undoubtedly rewarding if studied in themselves. In this study we have not incorporated material from Vedic and late-Vedic sources, nor have we paid great attention to the prescriptive Sanskrit literature of *Dharmaśāstra*, *Arthaśāstra* and *Kāmasūtra*. We have also not entered into any comparison with cultures outside India, like Mesopotamia, Egypt and similar civilisations which reveal the occurrence of 'ritual women'. We have chosen to do so not because we think that these studies would prove entirely without result, but because they require each their own specialised knowledge and methodology of research.

Instead, we have chosen to trace the meaning of the *phenomenon* of the devadasi in the cultural history of South India up to 1947. In her path-breaking work *Traditional Indian Theatre: multiple streams*, New Delhi, 1980, Kapila Vatsyayan argues the many mobile principles that determine a particular art-form at a given moment. Among these principles she distinguishes the levels of time, representing conservation as well as flux, of locus, comprising the factors of indigenous creation and mobility, of cultural stage (like food-gathering, village society and the progressive development from one stage into another), of social realities and of genre, reflecting the function of an art-form *vis à vis* its audience.

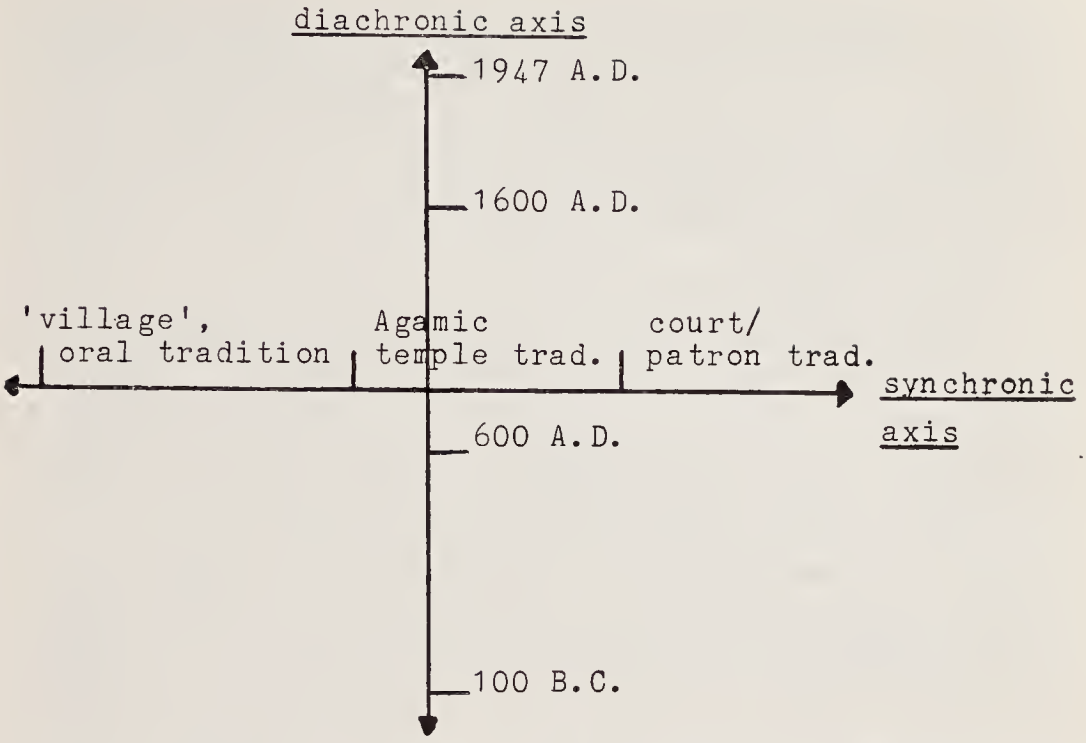
In our approach to the phenomenon of the devadasi we do not only consider the artistic repertoire of the devadasis as a specimen of performing arts, we will evaluate their entire tradition as part of the *sacer ludus* of Hindu-

ism, and investigate it accordingly as an example of traditional arts. The meaning, or the *concept* of the phenomenon of the devadasi is the aim of our investigation which Kapila Vatsyayan indicates by 'a concentrated still centre': "A recognition of the framework of the interconnection of levels, the interrelatedness of regions, the interdependence of art forms, and of the principles of eternity (of timelessness) and of flux (everchanging, ever renewing manifestation) demanding a concentrated still centre and peripheral multiple expressions, is essential for a true understanding of the traditions of the performing arts of India".[1] When we apply the recognition of this framework to the study of the devadasi tradition we will have to admit that neither a purely historical method nor that of philology alone will suffice.

> "It is estimated that more than two hundred millions of the people of India are of Dravidian ancestry, and while they are classified as Hindus and have adopted Hindu forms and names, their religion is that of Dravidian ancestors."
> W.Th. Elmore, *Dravidian Gods in Modern Hinduism*, 1925, p. xiv

The issue whether a cultural phenomenon is "Dravidian" or "Aryan" seems indeed in most cases very hard to solve. One of the reasons for rejecting a purely historical method in investigating the devadasi tradition is that, historically speaking, the devadasi has been traced back as far as the Indus Valley civilisation by some[2], while others find her prototype in Vedic literature[3]. The truth, however, may be that the majority of the material that was supposed to have constituted the history of the tradition has never received any written treatment, and remained within the realm of oral transmission only. Thus, many important historical developments have been most probably lost, and even those data that can be found today still in oral traditions usually are not taken into serious consideration. This latter point is of special importance to the study of the performing arts as Indian traditional teaching depends mainly on oral transmission, and, coupled to confidence in the principles of 'eternity (of timelessness) and of flux (everchanging, ever renewing manifestation)' expressed by Kapila Vatsyayan, we may discover in the oral traditions data that will prove to be the 'missing link' in the puzzle of historical development or the 'magic key' to an enigmatic problem. Therefore, however difficult, we should investigate the tradition of the devadasis from the broader perspective of both textual and non-textual evidence.

In this chapter we have tried to approach this 'concentrated still centre', or, in other words 'concept' of the devadasi tradition along two roads: firstly, along the investigation of 'diachronic modifications' of the tradition, and, secondly, via the scope of 'synchronic occurrence' of similar expressions of the same concept manifested differently in the various socio-cultural *foci*. This approach can neither be called historical nor sociological. In fact, it is a study of the interrelatedness of the devadasi tradition with South Indian culture.[4]



Graph 1: the two axes of modification of the concept of the devadasi-*nityasumaṅgalī*

A. Diachronic modifications

In this chapter, South Indian history has been divided into three major periods that can be considered of importance for the investigation of the phenomenon of the devadasi-*nityasumaṅgalī*:

1. 100 B.C.—600 A.D. —Classical and late classical period of Tamil culture
2. 600 A.D.—1600 A.D. —Medieval Hinduism
3. 1600 A.D.—1947 A.D. —Culture of the Tanjore Courts and subsequent developments

A.1. Classical and late classical period of Tamil culture

Sources

The first historical information about the South of India is found in Sanskrit, later Aryan, Greek, Roman and Chinese sources, whereas all indigenous sources belong to a later period. Until about 600 B.C., works composed in the North exhibit little knowledge of India south of the Vindhyas but acquaintance increased with the progress of the centuries. Kātyāyana, the grammarian of the fourth century B.C., who was probably a southerner, makes mention of the extreme South: Pandya, Chola and Kerala.[5] The next mention of the southern kingdoms is found in the second and in the thir-

teenth rock-edict of Aśoka (3rd century B.C.). The list in the second edict is more complete and includes the names of Chola, Pandya, Satiyaputa, Keralaputa and Tambapanni (Ceylon). All these lands are distinctly stated to have lain outside the empire of Aśoka.[6] Hereafter follows the famous Hāthīgumpha inscription of Khāravela (first half of the 2nd century B.C.) which mentions a league of Tamil states that was 113 years old at the date of the inscription; this league had been for some time a source of danger to the Kalinga kingdom.[7]

Information about the South of India of the pre-Christian era is found, too, in Greek and Roman sources, while contacts between China and South India by sea are attested as early as the second century B.C.[8]. Among the European classical writers, the first direct notice of South India occurs in Megasthenes who gives a quaint account of the Pandyan kingdom which is ruled over by queen Pandaia, a daughter of Herakles to 'whom he assigned that portion of India which lies southward and extends to the sea'. The kingdom was organized into 365 villages; one village had to bring the royal tribute every day and, if necessary, assist the queen in collecting it from defaulters. Trade between South India and Egypt was carried on in the Hellenistic period and continued more actively under the Roman empire. Strabo records the increase in knowledge of India among the Romans of his day and the success of the expedition under Gallus, sent by Augustus (25 B.C.) to secure for the empire the command of Aden and the Red Sea route to India which was becoming increasingly popular among the merchants of the empire. Pliny the Elder (ca. 75 A.D.), the anonymous author of the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*, and Ptolemy (130 A.D.) represent further stages in the increasing acquaintance of the Romans with the South of India.[9]

Thus far the literary evidence of Southern kingdoms as found in North Indian and foreign accounts. The first indigenous literary sources appear from the period of ca. 100 B.C.—300 A.D. onwards. Two large anthologies, namely the *Eṭṭuttokai* ("Eight Anthologies") and *Pattupāṭṭu* ("Ten Songs"), and the grammar *Tolkāppiyam* is all that has remained from the earliest written output of Tamil literature.[10] The oldest strata reflects largely the society that was encountered by the Aryan migrants into the South. As such it represents the most authentic source of indigenous Tamil culture. The texts that belong to this period are referred to as '*Caṅkam*' literature. This name indicates a norm-giving college (*caṅkam*) to which the poems were subjected for approval. Three such *caṅkams* were held comprising about 450 poets.[11] The majority of the poems that have survived in the form of anthologies can be dated between 100 A.D.—300A.D. with the exception of the *Puṟaṇāṉūṟu* that can, perhaps, be traced back in parts to as early as 100 B.C. The grammar *Tolkāppiyam* contains portions as old as 100 B.C.; they may be based on a much earlier *Urtext* which represented a bardic grammar of a possibly pre-Pāṇinian Aindra grammatical system.[12] However, later portions of the *Tolkāppiyam*, which are especially found in its third book *Poruḷatikāram*, seem almost certainly to be as late as the 5th century A.D.

From the literature that preceded the *Tolkāppiyam* nothing has remained but the traditional reference to five other grammars and a text called *Pūtapurāṇam* about which nothing further is known.

The texts of the '*Caṅkam* Age' constitute the most authentic indigenous information about Tamil culture during the earliest centuries around the beginning of our era. The texts that immediately follow this corpus show a significantly greater admixture of Tamil and Aryan culture, and go hand in hand with the 'fossilisation' of the old type of bardic literary compositions into anthologies. New literary genres arise: two epics (viz. *Cilappatikāram* and *Maṇimēkalai*) and didactic literature (*Tirukkuṟaḷ*). These developments are significant for a period of transformation under the influence of Sanskrit culture carried by the Brahmins, the spread of Buddhism and Jainism, and the invasion of the Kalabhras. Nothing definite is known about the Kalabhras.[13] From some Buddhist books we hear of a certain Accutavikkanta of the Kalabhrakula during whose reign Buddhist monasteries and Buddhist authors enjoyed much patronage in the Chola country. At any rate, the Kalabhras are denounced as evil kings (*kali aracar*) and only the joined forces of the Pandyas, Pallavas and Chalukyas could make an end to their rule in the 6th century A.D.[14]

Cultural conditions

The *Caṅkam* literature depicts a society and culture that stands in marked contrast to that of any later period. While post-*Caṅkam* writers dwell preferably on the theme of *mokṣa* (liberation from the chain of rebirths), of devotion (*bhakti*) or of morality, the *Caṅkam* poets are passionately interested in man's experience of this world and of this life. According to Zvelebil the universe was perceived (*kāṭci*) and conceived (*karuttu*) in terms of three basic categories: a space-time continuum which provides the back-ground, the space and time coordinates of an event; this is termed *mutal*, lit. "first basic things". The second major category is called *karu*, lit. "things born"; this category is first divided into Gods and Nature, then Nature is again divided into Human and Non-human nature. Finally, the third major category is termed *uri*, lit. the "proper, specific" aspect that is the essence of poetry; *uri* deals with the innermost psychological events, with the direct drama of human life, souls and hearts.[15] This direct experience of life was viewed from two angles: the inner world of feelings, sentiments and development called *akam* (lit. 'inside, mind, house, sexual pleasure'), and the outer world of human political and social behaviour called *puṟam* (lit. 'outside, valour, heroism'). This basic subdivision of the psychological essence (*uri*) of human life into erotic (*akam*) and heroic (*puṟam*) experience gave rise to two supergenres of love and war poetry. These two genres were in themselves subdivided into a great number of standardised "situations" (*tiṇai*) that employed a large array of conventional details concerning nature, time etc. from which the poet could choose in order to introduce, illustrate or indicate the intended physical-*cum*-emotional state of the hero or heroine of his poem. This

meticulous, sensitive subdivision of the conceptual world into more and more refined characteristic features is described as the 'theory of "interior landscape" ', and cannot be dealt with here in detail, especially since other scholars have done so in an excellent manner.[16]

For our understanding of the phenomenon of the *nityasumaṅgalī* it is important to investigate three main facets of the literature of the *Caṅkam* cultural milieu:

1. *Caṅkam* poetry was originally recited by various professional bards;
2. these bards were employed at the courts of local kings and chieftains;
3. the reality of *uri* ("things essential") that lay at the root of human development, emotions, feelings and actions, was larger than man, and intimately connected with the other two basic categories: *mutal* ("things first") and *karu* ("things born"). This essentially 'divine' appreciation of human psychology in symbiosis with the surrounding world is of vital importance for the concept of the *nityasumaṅgalī* and will therefore be discussed first.

Akam

The erotic involvement of two lovers is seen as naturally belonging to five basic situations that range from infatuation and consummation to infidelity. One-sided love and mismatched love are dealt with as well but outside the structure of the basic five situations (*aintiṇai*).

Although the lyrical character of the poetry is of central importance we should also keep our minds open for other, less overt meanings that are conveyed by the poems. For instance, it is clear that, irrespective of the poetical situation, the experience of infatuation, sexual attraction, and the emotion of love are considered as overpowering and difficult to control. We hear of love as a 'debilitating illness'[17], as vexing[18], and in many cases a girl's infatuation is mistaken for possession.[19] In extreme cases of unrequited love the suitor may take to riding the palmyra stem (*maṭal*) in public, a suicidal act of despair that should force the girl to answer his love.[20] The coming of age of girls is marked by the appearance of beauty spots on her breasts and on the *alkul* (*mons veneris*). In *Akam* 161, the *tōḻi* (female companion) describes how the heroine weeps so that cool drops wet her finely shaped young breasts (*iḷamulai*) on her chest where light-coloured spots (=the sign of puberty) spread, vexing because *aṇaṅku* is there (*aṇaṅku eṉa uṟutta*).[21] The connection between sexual maturity and the use of the word *aṇaṅku*, a term which basically indicates a 'sacred power' which was considered to be dangerous, and could be manifested, invoked or driven away, but which was not always malevolent, is of vital importance for the concept of the *nityasumaṅgalī*.[22] This aspect of the dangerous, oppressive nature of infatuation is well illustrated by *Kuṟuntokai* 337:

"The buds of her breasts have blossomed,
her soft thick hair falls from her head.
The compact rows of her white teeth are full,

since she has lost her baby teeth,
and a few spots (*cuṇaṅku*) have appeared on her body.
I know her,
and therefore she afflicts me.
She herself is not aware of it..."[23]

The theme of female breasts as the seat of divine power is found throughout South Indian literature. This power is especially effective in the case of a chaste woman. In the late classical epic *Cilappatikāram* (ca. 450 A.D.) the transformation of the heroine Kaṇṇaki is indeed striking: from a young, bashful and sweet-natured bride she changes into an almost demoniac avenger of the death-sentence that was passed upon her innocent husband. She transforms through the power of the chastity that has accumulated in her breasts, her left breast into a fiery missile by twisting it off, and hurling it onto the city of Maturai, she sets fire to the entire town. Only the Brahmins, the righteous, cows, chaste women, the aged and children are saved. This power that lies dormant in the breasts of females serves the cause of justice in the case of chaste behaviour; however, it leads to immediate destruction of the husband and the family in the case of infidelity on the part of the woman.[24]

While reading Tamil classical love poetry we should keep this aspect of the ambiguous power of sexuality in mind. Although many poems describe sentiments of what we would regard as 'romantic' love, we should realise that this notion is largely based on European culture. Although the Western ideal of happiness is very much based on successful romantic love, a concept inherited from the Occitan troubadours of the Middle Ages, we do not find such lofty appreciation of 'love' in Graeco-Roman classical literature. There, on the contrary, love seldom rises above the levels of merry sensuality or domestic comfort, except to be treated as a tragic madness (*áte* 'ατη) which plunges otherwise sane people into crime and disgrace.[25] Moreover, our judgement of 'love' poetry may be clouded by the fact that "within the last few decades, love has become one of the most overworked words in our vocabulary, and, as such it is totally incapable of being used in a well-defined specific sense". Reik, one of Freud's distinguished students, "took great pains to show that sex and love are different in origin and nature. They can be united and directed to the same object, but on closer examination they can be easily differentiated. He sees sex as an instinct, a biological need, originating in the organism and conditioned by chemical changes in the physiological structure. The sexual urge, in short, is dependent on inner secretions and can be localized in the genitals and other erotogenic zones. Its aim is the disappearance of a physical tension. (...) Love, on the other hand, is always a personal relationship and never a biological need. It is highly discriminating and there is no such thing as an impersonal love. According to Reik, love is possible only as an emotion of one person to another, but the sex object (the desired one) and the love object (the adored one) can be two different persons."[26]

The classical *akam* poetry moves on both levels of human erotic experience. On the one hand, we find the vexing and afflicting power caused by the beauty spots that indicate sexual maturity, on the other hand we find genuine feelings of personal love in many poems. The tremendous force of the sexual urge and its inherent dangers is well understood in the *Caṅkam* milieu. Therefore we see how the entire environment of the lovers tries to fuse the two levels of erotic attraction into one person. After the spontaneous response to mutual infatuation the ideal aim is marriage. We are told of the joint efforts of the circle of friends, foster-mother, passers-by and others in the village, as well as of the application of substances and flowers or leaves of plants on the most explicit erotogenic parts, and of the careful consultation of omens, in order to achieve that balance of the manifold feelings, tensions and impulses that accompany sexual maturity, and should lead to subsequent happiness in life. The force of *aṇaṅku* is potentially malevolent but can be controlled and turned into benevolent use. Similarly the natural urge of sexual ripeness is potentially vexing and dangerous but at the same tim it brings together males and females and forms the basis of all further procreation, sustenance of life, stability and happiness if properly controlled. Therefore all pains must be taken to harmonise this timeless universal power and principle in the life of each man and woman. This concept of the necessary harmony of male and female sexuality to ensure happiness, fertility and prosperity is one of the most basic motivations for the origin of the phenomenon of the *nityasumaṅgalī*.[27]

Puṟam

The basic life-force which expresses itself in human private life is encountered in man's social and political relations to the outside world in the form of prowess, bravery and heroism. Here, too, it is hard to control the intensity of these powers and in many cases we find critical events, persons and objects referred to as *aṇaṅku* as well. Central in the struggle to maintain the balance of the potentially benevolent and malevolent side of this 'sacred power' stands the king who is victorious over the enemy, who is just and therefore a steady support of regular rainfall and abundant crops. The role of the king is well expressed in *Puṟanāṉūṟu* 186:

"Rice is not Life,
water is not Life;
the king endows with Life
the world of fertile surface.
Therefore, to say
"I am Life"
is the duty of the king,
his army stocked with axes and spears."

The critical importance of the king is emphasized again and again in the

puṟam poetry. The genre of *puṟam*, too, was divided into five main poetic situations and into many themes (*tuṟai*). The poetic situations deal with the prelude of a battle, the invasion and actual fight till the glorious victory of the heroes and their king. In the situation of *pāṭāṇ* (praise) that is not considered to belong to the five main situations of 'war-action', ample opportunity is given to eulogy. The themes that are classified as belonging to one poetic situation or other abound in praise as well: praise of the invading warriors: the king's wrath and praise of him (*vañcittuṟaippāṭāṇ pāṭṭu*); 'praise of a sight': the reaction on seeing either a great hero or a hero-stone (*kāṭci vāḻttu*); 'praise of rule': extolling the king's rule for providing shelter and security (*kāvaṉmullai*). In other themes we see warriors brandishing their swords and accompanying the king who swings a shining blade in a war-dance while wearing anklets (*oḷvāḷamalai*); or, we hear the praise of the spoils of a victorious king recited on the battleground by one of his minstrels.[28] In all cases the most important message of the poetry seems to be the prowess, wrath and honour (*maṟam*), the fame (*pukaḻ*) and wealth (*celvam*) of a king. His wealth and generosity are regarded as the result of the first two which are equated with life itself. Honour, fame and prowess are the essence of the process of life. Without it no truly great and noble man can live. It is therefore not surprising to consider the *Caṅkam* poetry a product of a feudal society in which the noble ones (*cāṉṟōr*), the aristocracy of warriors, chieftains, and in their very centre the king, were the ideal norm and acumen of cultural expression. In such a milieu the position of the bard was of vital importance. Fame and honour were intimately connected with lineage and genealogy; these two were considered to be the elixir that kept the fallen heroes firmly established in their blissful world of heroes, imparting strength, happiness, wealth and lasting victory to the living noblemen. The continuation and ever-renewed creation of fame and honour depended on the recitation of praise by the various bards. The fact that *urai*, meaning 'to sound, speak, and tell', means also 'fame, honour, narration in prose, expiatory writing', and *icai*, meaning 'sound, noise, and word', also means 'renown, fame, glory; music, song', etc. reflects something of the interconnections that existed between these ideas: utterances, both prose and poetical, had in the early period of *Caṅkam* literature to do with fame and glory of men and gods; those who were expert in creating these 'powerful' utterances were the various bards that surrounded the king and his nobles.[29]

Before we turn our attention to the various bards that surrounded the king in both spheres of life (in *puṟam* as well as in *akam*) it is important to realise that these poems do not only convey the subject matter of love and war, but that they also describe man's efforts to deal with the highly dangerous but indispensable force of 'life-vitality'. Only a very careful and concentrated effort both in the private (*akam*) and public (*puṟam*) experience of life can ensure its benevolent effects towards the happiness, prosperity and peace of men and of the country. In many cases we find this dangerous, 'dynamic' power referred to as *aṇaṅku*; it stretches, however, beyond the two

fields of human psychology of heroism (*puṟam*) and love (*akam*). The recitation by bards was one of the methods to ensure either the continuation of honour and fame or the communication and control of harmonious love; other but similar methods were employed to control life beyond the experience of *akam* and *puṟam*.

Relations with the divine

The most characteristic feature of the cultural temperament as reflected in *Caṅkam* literature seems to be its fierceness. Both lovers and warriors are willing to run great risks to achieve their aim. An example of this fierce temperament is given in a paraphrase of *Puṟanāṉūṟu* 369, 372-3 etc. by the medieval commentator Naccinārkkiniyar (14th century A.D.). The scenes after the victorious battle are described thus:

> "Like the farmer reaping the ears of grain with his scythe, heaping them in stacks, spreading them on the floor and threshing them by driving bulls to trample them, and offering oblation to the gods and giving away a portion to needy beggars and enjoying the ceremonial meal with the kinsfolk, so the king mows down the enemy forces, piles up dead bodies on the battlefield, uses elephants instead of oxen to trample the corpses, gets these 'minced' corpses and carcasses cooked by a virgin, who stirs a huge pot containing blood and fat. This thick gruel is offered as libation to the gods. The remaining animals—elephants and heroes—that are unhurt are given away as largess."[30]

This gruesome description seems to indicate a sacrificial offering to the goddess of war, Koṟṟavai, who is surrounded by an army of demon-women (*pēymakaḷir*) joining her in dancing on the battlefield after the victory had been won. In ordinary times we hear of the affliction which these *pēymakaḷir* cause to the villagers. The exploits on the battlefield were obviously of such 'supra-natural, divine' vigour and vitality that the demon-women could rejoice over its effects. This awesome force which resulted in the slaughter of many enemies and in glorious celebrations of victory had to be cherished as well as kept under strict control for the welfare of man. However, it often proved to be more capricious and forceful than expected.

According to the early Tamil literature, the divine manifests itself in various shapes, shades and degrees of intensity. In most cases it is thought of as a power that is highly ambivalent: possibly benevolent, but usually dangerous and even malevolent. The most striking aspect of man's relation to these different manifestations is his attempt to control them by means of some type of 'dramatic performance'. The true evil (*cūr*, developing later into the personalised *cūraṉ*>Skt.*śūra*-) is too powerful to be dealt with by humans and has to be subdued by the god Murukaṉ. Tentatively, we may classify the manifestations of the divine as follows:

1. benevolent: the god Murukaṉ; the king
2. mildly ambivalent: hero-stone; *kantu* (stump of a tree)
3. ambivalent: *aṇaṅku* 'sacred power'
4. dangerous: *pēy*, *pūtam* (demon); Koṟṟavai
5. evil: *cūr*, Cūraṉ

Bards and dramatic performance

The bardic literature yields rich information about the great variety of performing artists. In all spheres of life we encounter performances of differing nature: we hear of rope-dancers[31], dancing women, of various bards, of dancing under the spell of possession, of dancing demons and of those who dance impersonating demons and ghosts. In most cases these performances are mentioned in a context that is of ritual or critical importance. The artists do not perform for mere leisure, it is clear that their art serves a distinct aim. In the sphere of the five manifestations of the 'divine' the performances intend either to support and incite, to reveal or to control the divine force that man is confronted with.

1. The benevolent manifestation of the divine is represented on two levels: on the human level by the king, who is life, order and prosperity incarnate, and on the divine level by the god Murukaṉ. At the court of the king bardic activity was most pronounced. The *Caṅkam* poetry makes mention of male and female bards who were supported by the king: the *pāṇar*, *porunar*, *vāyiriyar*, *paricilar*, *iravalar*, and female bards *viṟali* and *pāṭiṉi* all belonged to the innermost circle around the king.[32] The *viṟalis* are referred to as singing, dancing and playing the small lute. Both *pāṭiṉi* and *viṟali* are described as singing about the bravery (*maṟam*) of the king. Their songs maintained the prowess of the king, the force of his fame as well as of the fame of his illustrious ancestors. For this important task the bards received presents like golden lotuses and garlands apart from sumptuous food, drink and clothes. In certain cases the bards are referred to as *mutuvāy* (of old voice); this epithet is used, too, in utterances of mantic nature, and in objects of 'magic' importance like the processional car of the king.[33] It is therefore not surprising to find an accusation of the king as a 'fool' not to honour his bards properly[34], or the assumption that the king will even give his land and hill to the *viṟalis*.[35] Such and similar utterances can be found in the 'guidance-poems' (*āṟṟuppaṭai*) in which one bard or group of bards is advised by another bard to travel to a certain king who is famous for his generosity. The itinerant aspect of the bardic performance and its ubiquitous presence in the life of the king are striking. In the sphere of *akam* as well as *puṟam* the activities of the king are praised and idealised by his bards. The role of the *viṟali* and *pāṭiṉi* in singing love-poetry, in dancing and playing the lute at the court of the king[36] deteriorates in a later period in the function of being only a love-messenger between the hero and heroine.[37] The male bards seemed to have accompanied the king wherever he went. *Kuṟ*. 328.6 describes the *pāṇar* joined with the king in the battle; other bards (*porunar*) impersonate brave, fallen heroes

before the actual fight. The poetic themes of the *puṟam* poetry show the symbiotic relationship of the king and his bards: *iyaṉmoḻi vāḻttu* 'the bard riding next to the king praises him', *tuyileṭai nilai* 'advising the king to go to sleep the bard praises him', *perumaṅkalam* 'celebration of the king's birthday', *vāṉmaṅkalam* 'praising the king's sword, the symbol of safe-guard'.[38]

Many of the poetic conventions concerning the attendance of bards on the king in both his private (*akam*) and public (*puṟam*) life were continued in the performance of temple rituals and at the courts of later kings.

On the divine level, the god Murukaṉ embodies the prototype of the truly heroic warrior and of the ideal lover and beloved. He defends his devotees against evil and fear (*cūr*) that drain the vitality of their lives, and, as a handsome young hero, he is passionately engaged in wooing Vaḷḷi, a girl from the Kuṟa tribe. As the son of the goddess Koṟṟavai he subdues the demon Cūraṉ (*cūr*) successfully, and his love for Vaḷḷi follows as well closely the poetic conventions of Caṅkam poetry: the infatuation, immediate consummation and temporary elopement read like an *akam* poem.[39] Murukaṉ has his praises sung by *mutuvāy peṇṭir* according to *Akaṉāṉūṟu* 22.7.[40]

2. The mild, but already ambivalent force of the divine is manifested in the form of the *kantu* (Skt. *skandha–* 'pillar, post, stump of a tree') that is situated in the *potiyil* (hall for worship) and in the hero-stone. *Paṭṭiṉappālai* 246-9 describes how captive women (*koṇṭimakaḷir*) wash the shrine (*potiyil*), cleanse the *kantu*, deck it with flowers and light unquenching lamps for it in the evening. In *Neṭunalvāṭai* 38-9 we hear of similar worship by 'rain-eyed women of simple beauty who light lamps, strew rice and flowers', while *Puṟanāṉūṟu* 128.5-6 makes us aware of dancing women (*āṭumakaḷ*) belonging to the *potiyil* that attracts rain. The epithet 'rain-eyed' (*maḻaikkaṇ*) occurs also with the *viṟalis* and other chaste women who are said to have power over rain.[41] In this context the connection between rain, water and worship of the *kantu* seems to be of crucial importance. According to Subrahmanya Pillai, there was a direct connection between the worship of trees and their remaining stump and of that of the *kantu*. The ancient Tamils seem to have believed that it was necessary to offer daily worship in order to arrest and propitiate the spirit or 'sacred power' of the tree. If a break in the daily continuation would occur the deities would decide to leave their residence.[42] This belief is expressed as well in the later temple manuals (*āgamas*) with reference to daily worship.[43]

In the case of the erection and worship of hero-stones the situation seems to be reversed: the event of the glorious death of a valiant hero on the battlefield obviously left behind such an amount of 'vitality' that a suitable place for it had to be created where it could reside and receive the respect and worship it deserved. Similar customs survive till this day in village cults of South India where those people who died an untimely, violent death are honoured by the erection of a stone. If these dead feel that they are not given the proper respect they will demand worship by pestering the village with drought and disease. The notion that the life-energy and vitality that was displayed

must be preserved or propitiated connects the worship of the *kantu* with that of the hero-stone and the village cults. We may even interpret the erection of an image of Kaṇṇaki carved out of a stone specially brought for this purpose from the Himālayas as an expression of worship of extraordinary life-vitality. That this force was highly dangerous but at the same time necessary accounts for the basic feeling of 'unease' coupled with urgency. The *Tolkāppiyam* mentions not only the erection of a hero-stone as a poetical theme but it also describes the ceremony and the six stages in setting up the stone:

i. search for a stone
ii. fixing an auspicious time
iii. lustration or ceremonial bathing of the stone
iv. setting up
v. celebration, feasting
vi. praise and worship.[44]

It is worthwhile to compare this ritual with later practices in both temple and village worship.[45]

3. The ambivalence of the divine was indicated by the term *aṇaṅku*; etymologically it means to suffer, be distressed, be slain; to afflict; an affliction, pain, killing. Consulting the Tamil Lexicon we find: pain, affliction, suffering, disease; fear; goddess who takes away one's life by awakening lust or by other means; beautiful damsel, as resembling a celestial damsel; devil, dancing under religious excitement, especially possession by Skanda (i.e. Murukaṉ, SKS); beauty; form; young offspring (.....), possession by a demoness of lust or harm. Considering the early meanings of *aṇaṅku* a more general and underlying meaning of *fear-provoking divine or demoniac force* seems indicated.[46] Its mode of expression is generally more intense and eruptive in the case of association with humans, it is, however, also connected with natural phenomena like hill-tops, water, time and with the instruments and events of war-fare, of divination, and with the home. In many instances we hear of possession by *aṇaṅku*[47] or by *veṟi* or Murukaṉ's truth (*murukumeyppāṭṭu*).[48] The efficient method of dealing with such possessions was according to *Akaṉāṉūṟu* 22:

"....the women of ancient wisdom proclaimed:
"She will be soothed
by worshipping Neṭuvēl (i.e. Murukaṉ, SCK)
whose strong arms are famous
for wiping out those
who do not bow to him."
In the awe-inspiring midnight,
to invite Muruku,
red millet mixed with blood
was scattered as offerings,

to the loud singing in the shrine,
the spear was garlanded,
the threshing floor polished....."[49]

Hereafter the priest (*vēlaṉ* 'he with the spear') comes and drives out the inflicting force by dancing the *veṟiyāṭal*. Other persons are said to experience the *veṟi* as well: *āṭumakaḷ* ('dancing women') in *Kuṟ*. 105-3-4, and *maṭamakaḷ* ('simple women') in *Patiṟ*. 51.10 dance under its influence. In *Paṭ*.146ff. dancing women are described as 'intense because of the *veṟi* of *Cevvēḷ*' (i.e. Murukaṉ, SKS). The cause of a possession could be divined by the *veriyāṭal* of the priest with the spear (*vēlaṉ*) and by the halting sacred speech (*aṇaṅku noṭi*) of the beautiful *celvi* ('daughter, woman') of the *tuṇaṅkai* dance.[50] Another method of divination was the weighing of rice by 'good old women' (*cemmutu peṇṭir*)[51] or by listening to the lizard (*palli*). In the confrontation of man with the ambivalent force of the divine, both its afflicting manifestation and the means, method or persons who should redress the balance acquire a divine or 'magic' status (*aṇaṅku* or *mutuvāy*). It should be remembered that this task is considered as dangerous, unpleasant and testing since it means a direct contact with the eruptive force of the divine that unsettles human harmony. Therefore it was necessary to find a qualified candidate who could stand the strain of the 'job'. Many of the occasions that required such direct communication with the divine and that were indicated by *aṇaṅku* in the *Caṅkam* period, are referred to in later Hinduism as 'inauspicious' or 'heating', two categories that will be discussed at length below.[52]

4. The dangerous manifestation of the divine is represented by the *pēy*, *pēymakaḷir* (demons), *pūtam* (Skt. *bhūta* ghost, goblin) and the goddess Koṟṟavai. One of the playgrounds for these fierce expressions of 'sacred power' is the battle-field. The most intense confrontation between man and the divine takes place here. The goddess Koṟṟavai dances on the battle-field accompanied by a host of demons, ghosts, and demon-women. *Mat*. 24.8 depicts these *pēymakaḷir*: their mouth drips with fat of the gruel of dead bodies of elephants and enemies, cooked in the (*aṇaṅku*) fire, while the *tuṇaṅkai* dance of the awesome war is roaring. In *Patiṟ*. 57.3-4 the 'valiant' king (*valampaṭu kōṉmāṉ*) dances the *tuṇaṅkai* on the field covered with corpses. In various texts we are offered a description of the *pēymakaḷir*: they are full of strength, blackness or cruelty (*karuṅkaṭ pēymakaḷ*),[53] they move slowly to the head of the fortress[54], they have cloven feet and cruel look[55], they afflict anxiety[56], and, most interestingly, they feed on *piṇṭam* (ball, embryo, boiled rice) on the eve of the battle.[57] The dances that celebrate the victory are referred to in *Tolkāppiyam Puṟattiṇaiyiyal* 75 as *muṉtērkkuravai* and as *piṉṟērkkuravai*. The first is the dance of victory performed by the king together with his warriors on his chariot, while the second is danced, according to Naccinārkkiṉiyar behind the chariot by the *pēy*'s of Koṟṟavai. In a medieval text modelled on *Caṅkam* conventions even the *viṟalis* dance together with other bards behind the chariot of the king who wears the *pēykaḷal*, the

anklet of *pēy*'s.[58] This exuberant mood after a victorious battle may well have spread into the city. In certain instances we find the *tuṇaṅkai* performed during a feast (*viḻavu*) while the hero enters on his chariot accompanied by women who glorify his erotic exploits as well, drunk with toddy.[59] Other bards who appear in such festivals are *kōṭiyar*, hornblowers who are accompanied by the drum (*muḻavu*); they, too, are called *mutuvāy*.[60] *Perumpāṇāṟṟuppaṭai* 234-5 gives a vivid description of dancers clad as beautiful *pūtams* dancing the *tuṇaṅkai* hand in hand with a string of demons and thus forming the pattern of the silvery web of a spider.[61]

It is clear that the battle-field was the centre of such an intensity of 'life-vitality' that the activities that took place there demanded a massive response of the king, his warriors, bards and the entire population. They seem to be 'churned' into vigorous dramatic performance in the effort of absorbing and transforming the events into a livable, harmonious status quo.

5. The manifestation of the divine as ultimate evil is *cūr* or his personification Cūraṉ. The uncompromising quality of this evil can be matched only with the powers of a god. As the son of the goddess of victorious war, Koṟṟavai, Murukaṉ is capable of subduing *cūr* as Cūraṉ. However, even Murukaṉ cannot destroy or exterminate this evil power since it is of eternal nature. The demon Cūraṉ is split in two animals: the cock and the rooster who become subservient to the god; the impersonal *cūr* is controlled and subdued by Murukaṉ in each renewed manifestation. This task can be completed only by gods as it is beyond the strength of man.

Conclusions

The *Caṅkam* period is marked by an extensive bardic activity. The role of various bards acquired in many cases a mantic or 'magic' character: those bards who performed in the direct vicinity of the king were thought of as supporting his very life-essence, namely his fame and prowess, and the harmony of his home. Therefore, the bards were of vital importance to the king; this is reflected in the tie of 'duty' (*kaṭaṉ*) which existed between a king and his bards.[62] In general, the words of bards were believed to end anger and disease.[63] Outside the court and the life of the king we find a number of other bards who dance, foretell the future, divine and expel afflicting forces, play the horn or drum, and share a basic feature with the bards of the court: all deal with a subject-matter that is of 'divine power', whether it concerns the glory and love-life of the king, the vitality of the *kantu*, the cause of possession, or the test of life and death on the battle-field. This 'sacred, divine power' is in all cases indispensable and at the same time capricious and hard to control, propitiate or support. The attempt to deal with it by means of dramatic performance is seen throughout the entire literature of the *Caṅkam* and late *Caṅkam* period. The character of the various art forms must remain at this stage a task for future investigation. Only then, perhaps, a more definite antecedent of the devadasi-*nityasumaṅgalī* can be pointed out. In this study, however, we can offer no more than a few possible

candidates who may have developed into the later devadasi as she is known from Agamic temple ritual:

1. In the first place we consider the *viṟali* and *pāṭini* as the most likely antecedents of the devadasi.[64] Their task is not a mere pastime but of vital importance for the king's fame, strength and erotic life. With the change of the old bardic milieu these female bards transform into more sophisticated artists. The dancer-*cum*-singer Mātavi of the *Cilappatikāram* exemplifies this change of the *viṟali-pāṭiṇi* into the courtesan called *gaṇikā*, who is well-known from Sanskrit literature.[65] At the same time Mātavi retains strong bardic, Tamil traits: her first alliance is to the king, and after her debut[66] in his court she receives gold and a garland in a truly bardic fashion. The training which Mātavi underwent for seven years and the dances that were performed during the great festival for Indra give a strong impression that one is confronted not with a dancer of the *gaṇikā*-type, nor with a festival of Sanskritic culture but with a thoroughly Tamil artist in a Dravidian festival that has been fused with and explained by a new cultural context.[67]

2. In the second place we consider it plausible to search for antecedents of the devadasi-*nityasumaṅgalī* among the broader category of bardic performers found in *Caṅkam* literature. On the one hand is the basic function of direct contact with the ambivalent power of the divine shared by persons like *āṭumakaḷ*, *koṇṭimakaḷir*, *mutuvāy peṇṭir* with the devadasi-*nityasumaṅgalī*; on the other hand, is the survival of many bardic performers that are known from *Caṅkam* texts indicated by the village cults of the 20th century. This striking connection of the devadasi tradition with the beliefs and cults followed in villages will prove of major interest and will be dealt with below.[68]

A.2. Medieval Hinduism

In relation to the devadasi tradition of Tamilnadu we may distinguish three main periods within the millennium of Medieval Hinduism[69]:

1. Rule of the Pallavas and Pandyas (550-850 A.D.)
2. Rule of the Cholas (850-1279 A.D.)
3. Vijayanagara Empire (1336-1565 A.D.)

1. *Pallava and Pandya period*
Historical data

Two Hindu kingdoms arose after the defeat of the Kalabhras in Tamilnadu: in Madurai Pandya rule was established under king Kadungon (*Kaṭuṅkōṉ*) in 590 A.D., and in Kanchipuram Simhavishnu (*Siṃhaviṣṇu*) formed the kingdom of the Pallavas in 575 A.D. The Pallavas were almost constantly at war with the Chalukyas of Badami from the earliest period of their rule onwards.

Sources

The literary sources for this period are mostly confined to the voluminous literature of Saiva and Vaishnava devotion (*bhakti*) and to the earliest strata

of Tamil philosophical speculation expressed in the *Tirumantiram* (7th century A.D.). Both show the process of the fusion of indigenous Tamil and acquired Brahmanic cultures. In other works we find an apparently unbroken continuation of the 'bardic universe': for instance, the theoretical treatise *Akapporuḷ* (*Kaḷaviyal*) by Iṟaiyaṉār (5th-6th century A.D.) equates the subject-matter of *akam* (love) with Tamil itself. The *Puṟapporuḷveṇpāmālai* by Aiyaṉāritaṉār (date uncertain, 8th-12th century A.D.) deals with heroic themes and supplies poems illustrating each heroic theme.[70]

Cultural characteristics

The ascendancy of the Pallavas and the Pandyas to power inaugurated a period of 'Hindu religious revival' contra the dominating influences of Jainism and Buddhism that had made themselves strongly felt in the previous centuries in Tamilnadu. Didactic moralism had overshadowed the old bardic criteria as is clear from such texts as the *Tirukkuṟaḷ* (ca. 5th century A.D.). Neither the Tamils nor the Brahmins, who had reached the South before the Buddhists and Jainas, could have felt 'at home' in this cultural milieu. The massive effort to shake off the Buddhist and Jaina faith and its adherents can be considered as a joint enterprise of both Dravidian Tamil population and the Indo-Aryan Brahmins. The result was a flexible blend of these two cultures which is called Hinduism. It combines the passionate temperament of the Tamils with the ritual-cosmic base provided by Aryan, Sanskrit-based culture.

The first great temples were cut in stone out of the rocks near Kanchipuram (*Māmallapuram*) during this period. Similarly, old sacred places were converted into more solid structures; gods that were previously worshipped in the form of anthills became the central deity in a temple built on these places of age-old worship. The famous temple of Tiruvarur, one of the important religious centres of this and later periods, arose from the worship of an anthill (*Valmīkanātha*) and of the trumpet flower (*Bignonia chelonoides*). Local manifestations of the divine were often incorporated into the Hindu pantheon as either Siva or Vishnu; local goddesses were married off to the great Hindu gods, although not always without great friction. This eager incorporation and assimilation of local gods with those of the Indo-Aryan pantheon gave rise to a large corpus of myths and legends that explained the new relationships.[71]

Two factors may have prompted the fierce devotion for these gods: 1. a clear consciousness of one's own culture and one's own country had arisen during the unwelcome foreign domination; 2. the divine that was formerly represented by the local chieftain or king, found a new shape in the god who was imagined anthropomorphically and at the same time locally present as the sacred power of a place that had been considered sacred since olden times.[72] In this way the Tamil country became 'dotted' with sacred places manifested by the cult of the local gods. In a truly heroic spirit the devotees conquered as an 'army of saints' land for their new divine ruler. The new

bards of devotion travelled from one 'sacred court' to another like the bards of the *Caṅkam* age had done. The fact that the old social structure of heroes and non-heroes had been overrun by foreign invaders and had been supplanted by the introduction of the caste-system which distinguished mainly Brahmin versus non-Brahmin facilitated this 'devotional heroism'. Since both the Brahmins and non-Brahmins were intent on expelling Buddhism and Jainism, the devotional movement was not bound to any distinction of caste. The result was a vigorous revitalisation of South Indian culture and cultural consciousness as well as a redefinition of political, cultural and social standards.

The literary products of the *bhakti* movement have remained alive in Tamil culture until today. They have been preserved in two canons: the Saiva canon comprising the *Tirumuṟai*, the collection of the works of 29 authors, and the Vaishnava canon called *Nālāyirativvyappirapantam.*[73] There seems to have been no conflict between the Saiva and Vaishnava devotees during the period of creation of these two canons. Only by the time of compilation of these devotional poems, and their exegesis disputes between Saivas and Vaishnavas arose. During the rule of the Pallavas and Pandyas, however, the *bhakti* movement experienced its full creative force.

Continuation and reformulation of bardic performance

On the previous pages we discussed possible antecedents of the devadasi. *nityasumaṅgalī* in the context of *Caṅkam* culture. Basically, we distinguished two types of candidates: 1. the *viṟali-pāṭiṉi*, succeeded by Mātavi, and 2 performers from the broader scope of bardic performance.[74] The cultural connotation of the *viṟali* changed from the bardic professional songstress, dancer and musician into a mere messenger between the hero and heroine according to the *Paripāṭal* (date uncertain: 350-600 A.D.). By the time of medieval literature the *viṟali* occurs mostly in a coarse and vulgar context.[75] The dancer of the type of Mātavi became absorbed by the Sanskritic class of courtesans (*gaṇikā*) who functioned mostly as artists and who maintained only the tiniest possible link with religion. The temples that could afford a ritual female servant who was as well skilled in the various arts of song and dance belong probably to a later period. During the times of Pallava and Pandya rule it seems more plausible to connect the first devadasis 'proper', i.e. functioning within the structure of temple ritual, with the second group of bardic performers.

Continuation of bardic performance

The works of the earliest saints abound in examples of the continuation of the fierce heroic temperament that surrounded the king of the *Caṅkam* age: his victorious wars, his intimacy with his bards, the *joie de vivre* at his court and the straight-forward, often gruesome modes of worship are echoed in the expressions of devotion (cf. plates 1 and 2).

The oldest saint of the group of 64 Saiva *nāyaṉārs* whose life-story is described by the hagiographer Cēkkiḻār in his work, the *Periyapurāṇam* (12th

cent. A.D.), is Kāraikkālammaiyār (550-600 A.D.). Her devotion leads her ultimately to the burial ground where she accompanies Siva's dance as a *pēymakaḷ*. Among the Vaishnava saints we find a similar association: the names of two of the earliest saints (ca. 650 A.D.) *Pūtam* ('ghost, malignant spirit') and *Pēy* ('devil, demon') belong to the bardic universe. Pēy is said to have been born in a red lotus which is often held as a synonym of the goddess; Pūtam was born in a *mātavi* blossom. Their divine inspiration resembles the oppressive experience of *aṇaṅku*: "one night the three saints Pūtam, Pēy and Poykai (whose name means natural pond, and who was born in a golden lotus, SKS) took shelter from heavy rain; suddenly they felt a mighty Presence squeezing in among them; it was Vishnu himself".[76]

A second feature of bardic culture which continued was the worship of the hero-stone. An example of a devotional hero is the popular, fierce saint

Plate 1 : The saint Kaṇṇappaṉ prepares to replace the bleeding eye of Siva by his own remaining eye; in order to be sure of the proper place where to fix it Kaṇṇappaṉ ties his foot to Siva's wounded eye.
Illustration from *Periyapurāṇam* (12th century A.D.)

Plate 2 : The saintly oil-monger Kaliyanāyaṇār prepares to supply the temple-lamps with his own blood.

(*vaṇtoṇtar*) Tiṇṇaṇ-Kaṇṇappaṇ, a hunter of the hill tribes. After a strenuous hunt for a wild boar, he finally succeeds to kill the animal. While cooking preparations are going on he discovers an erect stone with an engraved face that had received worship by flowers. The commentators maintain that Kaṇṇappaṇ identified the stone as Siva, but he himself may very well have seen a hero-stone. This interpretation is certainly indicated by his actions. To the despair of the Brahmin who officiated at the stone, Kaṇṇappaṇ offers the god the best portion of meat, after testing its softness first by biting into the flesh, he smears the stone with blood and pours water that he had carried in his mouth from the river. The next morning he goes out to hunt for new offerings to his god. During his absence the Brahmin sees the defilement of his god and immediately proceeds to purify the place. Siva then tests his devotee Kaṇṇappaṇ and convinces the Brahmin thereby of the true *bhakti* of the saint: when Kaṇṇappaṇ returns he sees the eye of the image bleeding and immediately plucks out his own to replace the wounded eye of the lord. This proves an immediate cure; however, immediately the other eye starts to bleed as well whereupon Kaṇṇappaṇ prepares to pluck out his remaining eye. At that moment his hand is stopped, Siva blesses him, restores his eye and thus convinces the Brahmin of the truth of fervent devotion. The valour displayed by Kaṇṇappanāyaṇār is not unlike the *maṟam* of the heroic warriors; his worship of the *liṅga*-stone of Siva proves the acceptance of older

modes of worship provided they are motivated by the new devotion (*bhakti*). Other saints died heroic deaths and would have deserved the worship of the community by means of the erection of a hero-stone. In the new context the heroic devotees are turned into saints and are worshipped as such. Examples of such saints can be found in the *Periyapurāṇam* in the accounts of the attainment of sainthood by Meypporuḷ Nāyaṉār, Arivāṭṭāyanāyaṉār, Kalikkampanāyaṉār and Pukaḻttuṇaināyaṉār.

A third characteristic of the *Caṅkam* period is the continuous and victorious warfare. The king and his warriors successfully conquered lands, and so do the saints for their god. The great saint Tiruñāṉacampantar impaled 8000 Jainas in Maturai in defence of Saivism.[77] Other saints among the 64 show warrior-traits as well. The loyalty to one's god was answered by the Lord with the same familiarity and *joie de vivre* that had existed at the *Caṅkam* courts. In the classical period a strong, emotional tie had existed between the chieftain Pāri and his bard Kapilar, and between king Atiyamāṉ and the poetess Auvaiyār. When Pāri's end was near he entrusted the care of his two daughters into the hands of his bard Kapilar. Similarly, there existed a strong emotional bond of mutual love between Siva and his saint Cuntaramūrttināyaṉār. Siva's affection went so far that he was willing to function even as 'love messenger' between Cuntaramūrtti and his beloved Paravai. On the other hand the saint does not hesitate to blame Siva for taking away his eyesight; he points out to him that he is a slave of his own free will and that Siva is therefore obliged to restore the sight of his eye.[78] Even god seems to have his duty (*kaṭaṉ*) to his sincere devotees.

As a last example of the continuation of practices and beliefs current during the *Caṅkam* period we have chosen the stories of the attainment of sainthood of Ciṟuttoṇṭanāyaṉār and of Kaliyanāyaṉār. In the case of Ciṟuttoṇṭanāyaṉār Siva took the form of a mendicant of the *Kapāli-Bhairava* sect. Carrying a human skull as begging bowl he arrived at the house of the saint and his wife. Naturally, they were eager to serve the mendicant any food he would ask for. Siva demanded their only child, a boy of five years old, to be served to him. When the dish was prepared he invited the parents to join him in his food but ordered them first to call for their son. In utter confusion the parents called out for the boy who returned sane and healthy. The test which Siva inflicted on these devotees was of such gruesome nature that it reminds the reader of the sacrifices for the goddess Koṟṟavai prepared on the battlefield.[79] Another example of a blood sacrifice is the test that Kaliyanāyaṉār, the oil-monger, had to pass. Siva caused his resources to run out by which the saint became too poor to supply oil for the hundreds of oil-lamps which he used to light in the temple. Facing the ultimate end of his oil supplies he thought of cutting his limbs to fill the lamps with his own blood for fuel. Just when he was about to cut his own throat Siva stopped him and received him in his grace.

The character of the oldest saint-poets indicates a prowess of the old *puṟam* type, coupled with an ecstasy, tenderness and love that recalls the

akam poetry. It is, however, difficult to indicate a direct successor of the bardic *viṟali-pāṭiṇi* who could leisurely dwell on love-poetry and instrumental music or dance as was done at the courts of the *Caṅkam* kings. The only direct successors, structurally speaking, are Kāraikkālammaiyār among the Saiva saint-singers and Āṇṭāḷ (8th century A.D.) in the Vaishnava faith. Whereas Kāraikkālammaiyār (6th century A.D.) identifies herself with the demon-women (*pēymakaḷir*) accompanying Siva's dance on the burial ground, Āṇṭāḷ 'marries' lord Vishnu of Śrīraṅgam; her poems, the *Tiruppāvai* and *Tiruvāymoḻi* were meant to be sung in a particular melody (*rāga, arākam*) and rhythm (*tāla, tāḷam*).[80] The difference between the two female saint-singers may be caused not only by their religious leanings but also by the political situation of their times. In the 6th century Tamilnadu was in a state of continuous warfare against the Buddhist and Jaina adherents and their external support by the Chalukyas. In this period we read also about *mātaṅkis* as a gloss for *pāṇmakaḷ* (one of the terms for *viṟali*).[81] The *Yāpparuṅkalakkārikai* (10th-11th century A.D.) mentions *mātaṅki* in *ceyyuḷiyal* 9; the commentary by Kuṇacākarar explains the term as indicating a female who performs simultaneously three actions: *vāḷ vīci* ('swinging the sword'), singing the praise of Katirvēl (i.e. Murukaṉ as 'Spear of light') or of the *nāṭaṉ* (chieftain of the country), and thirdly, beating the *taṇṇumai* (drum resembling the type of *mattaḷam, muḻavu* or *uṭukkai* drum).[82] Another text that indicates the change of the *viṟali* from a court-bard into a more fierce performer is the *Puṟapporuḷveṇpāmālai* (ca. 8th-12th cent. A.D.); this late bardic 'grammar' that follows the conventions of *puṟam* poetry mentions the *viṟali* as the one who sings *pukaḻ* (fame, glory) of the vigorous king (*tiraḷ vēntaṉ*), and as dancing behind the chariot of the king with the demon-anklet (*pēykaḻal*) as was discussed before.[83]

It seems that we should imagine the earliest devadasis functioning within the temple ritual rather like the energetic *mātaṅki*, related to Kāraikkālammaiyār, or the later version of the *viṟali* dancing behind the chariot of the king. The temperament of the early period of *bhakti* seems to have been one of constant warfare. Only when the new cultural milieu had been firmly established less vigorous modes of worship may have arisen. The devadasi of these early centuries of *bhakti* might have belonged rather to the second group of 'candidates' from *Caṅkam* culture, as the first ceased temporarily to exist in the turmoil of the political developments. By the 8th century more subdued expressions of worship as well as offerings of a more artistic character may have been added to the merely ritual and defensive attitude of the 6th and 7th centuries. This combination of ritual and artistic service of women to a god in a temple is the most generally accepted image of the devadasi. This character emerges first in the later centuries of the Pallava-Pandya rule.

Reformulation of bardic performance into devadasi-nityasumaṅgalī

In the poetry of the famous Saiva saint Māṇikkavācakar (9th century

A.D.) we read for the first time a description of the girls serving in the temple as well as an indication of their tasks. In the hymn *Tirupoṟcuṇṇam* ('sacred dust of gold') we find references to their appearance: in line 29 the girls are described as *maṅkai* indicating their age-group (12 to 13 years old) with auspicious eyes (*vāṭṭu*—'handsome, right, lucky'), with a row of bracelets (*varivaḷai*), heaving bosom that is said to be adorned with pearls (line 37), and shoulders shining with ashes. They seem to be adorning the temple in preparation of a festival: in the first stanza (lines 1-4) they suspend garlands wrought out of flowers and pearls, they place the *muḷaikkuṭam* ('germ-pot'), *dhūpa* and *dīpa* (burners of incense and light), they sing auspicious songs (*pallāṇṭu*) with the names of *Cakti*, *Cōmi* and *Pārmakaḷ* ('lady of the earth'). In stanza 3 they adorn the place with beautiful ashes, smear it with cow-dung (or sandal paste), they sprinkle pure gold, spread the treasures out; they plant the *kaṟpakam* tree of Indra, place everywhere bright lights and take the *koṭi* (banner). These preparations bear a close resemblance to the preparatory rituals of a procession (*utsava*) which we will discuss in detail in Chapter II.[84] When these temple-girls move into the town surrounded by the singing of devotees (*toṇṭar*), the people greet (*nāṭavar*) with loud acclaim (*ārppa*); they answer with similar enthusiasm, according to stanza 7, lines 26-27.[85] The hymn *Tirupoṟcuṇṇam* is not the only clear indication of participation by devadasis in the ritual. In other songs like *Tiruteḷḷēṇam* ('tambour song' sung while beating sticks with a partner) we hear of girls of slender waist, red lips and bright smiles (line 34); in *Tiruccāḻal*, *Tiruppūvalli*, *Tiruttōṇōkkam* the antecedents may be recognised of many types of songs from the repertoire of the devadasis as it has come down to us today. Their majority is based on folk songs and games that are accompanied by song and sometimes even by simple dance steps. Poems like *Tiruppoṉṉūcal* ('sacred golden swing') and *Tiru Ammāṉai* go back to the *Caṅkam* themes and the *Cilappatikāram* but form as well part and parcel of the devadasi repertoire.[86] The hymn *Tiruppaḷḷiyeḻucci* (raising from the sacred couch) is now sung in the month of Mārkaḻi (December-January) by *ōtuvārs* (male singers); it was sung by devadasis till 1947.[87]

The significance of Māṇikkavācakar for the tradition of the devadasi-*nityasumaṅgalī* consists in the fact that his work seems to represent a completion of the synthesis of the bardic Tamil culture and Brahmanic traditions of ritual and philosophic thought. The circle of transformation appears to have reached fruition: the 'bardic' king was supported by male and female bards who sustained his Fame and Honour, his very life-essence, and who dwelt with great sensitivity on the subject-matter of love. These bards were, together with colleagues outside the court, responsible for the balance of the two ways of 'sacred power': the way manifested on the battle-field (*puṟam*), and the other way expressed in the king's erotic life (*akam*). This cultural universe was disrupted by a foreign culture that was oriented towards entirely different aims: instead of heroism and love, the ideals of life were morality, didactic knowledge, and prosperity based on mercantile activities. After

having successfully shaken off this ill-fitting culture, the old bardic concepts were reformulated in a new setting: a territory was conquered (*puṟam*) for the new 'divine king', and, his Glory and Fame were established and eulogised by the new retinue of bards. The world of eros (*akam*) came to include not only the emotional world between two human beings but, due to the influence of Brahmanic speculation, it became an emotional rapport with the divine, personified by the heroic god, whose territory stretched beyond Tamilnadu into the universe.

This fusion included the entire cultural heritage of the past and kept it united for more than a millennium to follow. The devadasi-*nityasumaṅgalī* should be understood from the point of this flexible fusion. By the time of Māṇikkavācakar she had come to include the bard, the courtesan, as well as the ritualist.

2. *Chola Period*

Historical data

"The capture of Tanjore by Vijayalaya, some time before 850 A.D., and his founding of a temple there to the Goddess Nishumbhasudini (Durgā) were the first steps in the rise of Chola power."[88] The militant, passionate movement of Hindu devotion matured and was consolidated under the rule of the Cholas. In its heyday the Cholas were able to extend their empire to the river Ganga on the Indian subcontinent and even to countries accessible only by sea. The greatness of the Chola empire dates from the coronation of Aruḷmoḷivarman as Rājarāja in 985 A.D., and it lasted till 1279 A.D. when Rājendra III was defeated by the Pandya forces. In the course of two centuries this empire came to include the entire South of India as well as parts of Indo-China, Malay Archipelago, Indonesia, Cambodia, Burma and Ceylon.[89]

After the collapse of Chola power, a period of continuous strife and war lasted for about 100 years. The clashing forces were those of the Pandyas and Hoysala in the South, and of the Kakatiyas and Yadavas in the North. This turbulent period coincided with the first raid and invasion by Muslim forces. The attacks under Malik Kafur (1310 A.D.) resulted ultimately in the short-lived sultanate of Madurai that was overthrown in 1378 A.D. by one of the first rulers of the Vijayanagara dynasty.

Sources

The literary activity of this period is characterised by its many-sidedness. On the one hand the consolidation of the fusion of two cultures that took place during the previous three centuries is expressed in works like hagiographies, *purāṇas*[90], and Tamil versions of the great Sanskrit epics Mahābhārata and Rāmāyaṇa. On the other hand we can distinguish a continuation of the bardic tradition of *puṟam* poetry as well as commentatorial and learned literature dealing with bardic literature and with the theory of grammar.[91] An example of the continuation of *puṟam* poetry is *Kaliṅkattupparaṇi* by

Cayaṅkoṇṭār (11th century A.D.). The genre *paraṇi* is "a poem which has for its hero a warrior who killed 700 or 1000 male elephants on the battlefield. It is not only a war poem but a poem praising and extolling wars, pervaded by an ideology serving the ruling dynasty".[92] It forms a direct link with the bardic *puṟam* poetry, with *Pāṇṭikkōvai* (ca. 670-1000 A.D.),[93] and with the *Puṟapporuḷveṇpāmālai*. Cayaṅkoṇṭār was the court-poet of Kulottunga I (1070-1122 A.D.)[94] and extolled in his work the heroic feats of his ruler in the war against the Kalingas.[95] "There is a tradition that the Chola king was so impressed with the poem that, at its rehearsal, he rewarded the poet by rolling a golden coconut at the end of each stanza."[96] In the field of commentatorial literature, a number of commentaries on bardic literature were written by, for instance, Nakkīrar (8th century A.D.), Iḷampūraṇar (11-12th century A.D.), Cēṉāvaraiyar (13th century A.D.), Aṭiyārkkunallār (12th-13th century A.D.).[97] In learned writing a distinction was made between works described as *ilakkaṇam*, i.e. normative literature, grammars, and *ilakkiyam*, i.e. works on which these grammatical norms had been imposed.[98] In the field of the performing arts we may distinguish a similar tendency, although these commentatorial and normative works were written mostly in Sanskrit and for a greater part outside the Chola empire.[99] The Tamil works on the praxis of performing arts will be discussed further on.[100]

A third type of writing received for the first time independent, literary treatment: the large bulk of *piḷḷaittamiḻ*, a poetic form depicting the child-life of a hero or god[101], *ulā*, "(king's) procession",[102] and *nāṭakam*, drama, came to be written from the Chola period onwards. Historical plays (e.g. *Rājarājeśvaranāṭakam*) and popular plays (e.g. *Pūmpuliyūrnāṭakam*) are known from inscriptions only by name.[103]

This period is well documented by epigraphical accounts. Many temples arose during the reign of the Cholas; some of them were built for the specific purpose of coronation: examples of these grand temple complexes are Tanjore *Bṛhatīśvara* (completed in 1009 A.D.) and Gangaikondacholapuram (*Kaṅkaikoṇṭacōḻapuram*) which was finished under Rajendra I (1012-1044 A.D.).[104] The temple of Chidambaram (*Ciṟṟampaḻam*) was enlarged and beautified under the Cholas who used this temple, too, for their coronation ceremonies. The central position which the temples occupied in the cultural life of the Chola empire accounts for the large number of inscriptions that can be found on their walls. For the same reason do temple manuals (*āgamas* and their commentaries) and temple chronicles (like the *Śrīraṅgam Kōyil Oḻuku*) furnish much information.[105]

Cultural characteristics

The splendour and power of the Chola empire has not found its equal in Tamilnadu after the collapse of their rule in 1279 A.D. It moulded South Indian cultural and social life in a pattern that was decisive for centuries to come. The grandeur of the ruler was expressed in two *foci*: his court and the imperial temple. The opulence and sophistication of the court are ex-

pressed by Chau Ju-Kua, a Chinese author of the early 13th century A.D.: "At state banquets both the prince and four court ministers salaam at the foot of the throne. Then the whole company present break into music, song and dancing (.....); for his (the prince's) table and escorts he employs fully a myriad dancing girls, 3000 of whom are in attendance daily in rotation".[106] The innumerable servants of the royal household were organised in *vēḷams*[107] and settled in separate quarters in the capitals. Offices tended to become hereditary and there was no clear distinction between civil and military employment. Remunerations often took the shape of assignment of land (*jīvitas*).[108]

Similarly, the temple employed hundreds of temple servants. Even those temples that did not function as imperial, coronation temples enjoyed a great amount of patronage from both the king and wealthy patrons. The temples possessed vast lands; from its revenue was maintained not only the worship in the temple but also several institutions for the benefit of the population, like hospitals, colleges and *maṭhas* ('monastery'). The temple functioned as a centre of culture, employment, and sometimes even as moneylender.[109] Hence settlements arose and expanded around temples. In the famous inscription of the Tanjore *Bṛhatīśvara* temple (*South Indian Inscriptions* Vol. II, No. 66) a detailed account of the number of employees and their remuneration is given.[110] An important aspect of these appointments is that they became hereditary, provided the candidate in question was properly equipped for the assigned task. The descendants of actors, dancing girls, accountants, musicians and physicians etc. had the right to hold the same post. In inscriptions we find examples of the appointment of dance-masters in the place of a deceased relative,[111] but also of the necessity to prove his skill by dancing with gestures.[112] In the case of the appointments for a newly built temple, proficient persons were transferred to the new temple. The inscription from the Tanjore *Bṛhatīśvara* temple that was mentioned above registers the transfer of 400 dancing girls from several temples to the new temple. The hereditary right to an assignment became important in view of the number of people who donated themselves or their family-members to the temple as a last method to repay their loans or debts, or even as an act of devotion.[113] Another factor of possible competition were the servants that were employed temporarily for artistic performances or for menial work. The inscriptions report the temporary employment of a group of actors whose task it was to perform the *Rājarājeśvara nāṭaka* during the festival held in the month of *Vaikāci* (middle of May to middle of June).[114] Sometimes such performances were 'donated' to the temple by a wealthy devotee.[115] For regular performances of ritual and of arts like music and dance, lands were given to the temple which were termed *pōkam* (Skt. *bhōga* 'enjoyment'). Thus, *arcanāpōkam* indicated lands given for the performance of *arcanā* (ritual worship by Brahmins), and *nṛttapōkam* lands given for the maintenance of dancers and their performances. Lands that were given to individuals were referred to as *kaṉi* ('fruit, result'): *patiyilār kaṉi* was given to female

temple-dancers, *nāṭṭuvakkaṉi* to dance-masters, *pāṇakkaṉi* to teachers of music.[116]

Dancing women

It is clear from the inscriptions that both the court and the temple supported a large number of female dancers and singers; however, it seems that the two centres did not employ each other's artists.[117] We have sufficient evidence to assume that both types of artists, court dancers as well as temple dancers, were held in great esteem and were generally very rich. Examples of their valuable donations can be found in epigraphical records.

1. *Court dancers*

Aṇukkiyar Paravai Naṅkaiyār can be considered as an example of the high respect that court dancers enjoyed in the times of the Chola empire.[118] She is most famous for her donation to the temple of Tiruvarur. Among them there are not only jewels and lamps[119], but even such large donations which enabled the temple to rebuild its constructions in stone. She endowed large quantities of gold for the purpose of plating and gilding parts of the *vimāna* ('shrine'), the entrance and the four sides of the shrine of Vītiviṭaṅkar.[120] Copper was donated for plating the doors and corbels of the pillars of the *maṇḍapa* (pavillion') in front of the shrine. An inscription of the 20th regnal year of Rajendra I (1012-1044 A.D.) says that the emperor arrived at the shrine of god Vītiviṭaṅkar along with Aṇukkiyār Paravai Naṅkaiyār at his side in his chariot. A brass lamp was set up at the place where the ruler and Aṇukkiyār Paravai Naṅkaiyār stood while offering worship to the deity. The affection of Rajendra I for his favourite (*aṇukki* 'one who is intimate') seems to have been so great that a village was named after her as Paravaipuram and a temple as Paravai-Īśvaram. During the reign of Rājādhirāja I (1018-1054 A.D.) provision was made for offerings to the images of Rājendra and Paravai Naṅkaiyār in the Tiruvarur temple.[121]

2. *Temple dancers*

The inscription makes mention of donations that were made by dancing girls as well as to them. Temple dancers usually donated gold, lamps, or cows and sheep, and even land.[122] The revenue from the latter would provide for the supply of oil for perpetual lamps. Donation to temple dancers consisted in personal grants of lands or in the gift of land for the maintenance of a group of temple artists.[123] From epigraphical material one may assume that the temple dancers were highly respected members of society who were well provided for by the temple and by the community of devotees.

Terms for various types of temple dancers and of arts performed in the temple:

a. temple dancers

The opulence of the Chola period is evident in the abundance of epigraphical records and in the great variety of the terms for temple dancers

mentioned therein. Whereas the terms for female dancers are limited in the *Caṅkam* period[124] and not very variegated with reference to the female temple dancer in the Pallava-Pandya period[125], we do find an extensive terminology for such servants in the records of the Chola and subsequent periods. It seems that there existed a hierarchical classification of temple dancers. One instance gives the order of precedence among female temple servants, listing *ṛṣabhataḷiyilār* ('those belonging to the temple of the bull'), *tēvaraṭiyār* ('slaves of god'), and *patiyilār* ('those belonging to the *pati*' meaning 'residence' or 'lamp placed on a pot for driving away devils from a person by magic').[126] The term *devadāsī* (*tēvatāci*, *tēvaraṭiyār*) occurs not earlier than the Chola period. Other general terms for devadasis are: *taḷiccērippeṇṭukaḷ* ('women belonging to the street of the temple'), *nakkaṉ* (meaning either 'naked' from Skt. *nagna* or 'elder sister' from Ta. *akkāḷ*), *patiyilār*, *rudragaṇikā* ('courtesan of Rudra-Siva'), *māṇikkam* ('ruby' or 'dancing girl' as a short form of *māṇikkattāḷ*) and *talaikkōli* ('female holding the *talaikkōl*-rod'). The last four terms are of special importance for our investigation: the term *patiyilār* was explained by the informant Smt. P.R. Thilagam as indicating the highest degree of devadasis serving in the temple of Tiruvarur[127]; according to her tradition the dancer Mātavi of the *Cilappatikāram* and the temple servant Paravai, the beloved of Cuntaramūrttināyaṉār, belonged both to the *patiyilār vakkam* (colloquial for *varukkam*<Skt. *varga* 'class; lineage; group'). *Rudragaṇikā* is a term of respect that can be found mostly in Sanskrit Agamas and their commentaries or in the vocabulary of highly cultured, Sanskrit oriented writers and composers like Muttusvāmi Dīkṣitar (1775-1835 A.D.).[128] *Māṇikkam* is an old term indicating the female officiant who should wave the *tiruālatti* ('sacred light of camphor') before the god during festivals. In an inscription of Pudukkottai we find a reference to an order of Kulottunga Chola I (1070-1120 A.D.) that during the *tiru ālatti*, that was accompanied by dance, the worshippers should stand behind the *māṇikkam*.[129] In recent times the term *māṇikkam* was used with reference to those women of devadasi descent who would perform this service in the house of a private person.[130] The last term *talaikkōli* occurs rather frequently in the inscriptions of the Tiruvarur Tyāgarājasvāmi temple. The deity is said to have witnessed dance performances by dancers termed *talaikkōli*[131]; during festivals the deity was placed in pavilions like the *devaśrīyamaṇḍapa* from where he could watch the performances, or even in an *āṭṭattuveḷi* ('open air theatre').[132] *Talaikkōli* seems to have been a title which was given to dancing women[133]; it connects the devadasis of Tiruvarur with the legendary dancer Mātavi of the *Cilappatikāram* whose initiation ceremony was performed by worship of the *talaikkōl*.[134]

Besides these four selected terms for temple dancers or female temple servants the inscriptions yield several other terms which cannot be given here in full.[135]

b. Performing arts

The nature of performing arts is, unfortunately, such that they can be preserved only by direct transmission from teacher to pupil. Although we have rich epigraphic data concerning the performing arts practised in the temples during the Chola period, and although we may presume that several genres of dramatic arts have been continued without interruption, it is difficult to express any definite statement about the character and form of theatre, music and dance of those times. It is, however, interesting to notice the continuation of certain terms, practices and instruments from the *Caṅkam* time onwards till ca. 1300, and the preservation of art forms that are mentioned in the inscriptions, in expressions of dramatic art found in villages all over the South of India. Terms like *akamārka* ('way [Skt. *mārga*] of *akam*') and *kuṭaviḷakku* ('pot-lamp') go back to *Caṅkam* literature.[136] Other terms for offerings of dance can be identified with regard to their place in the structure of temple ritual; in several cases we can suggest songs and dances in the repertoire of the devadasis of the 20th century that may be connected with them. Examples of such terms are: *cantikkuṇippam*, probably indicating the dances at the nine cardinal points (*sandhi*) on the temple ground, later known as *navasandhi kautvam*; a variant of these dances may be the *cantikkūttu*; *cokkam* ('beauty') seems to be connected with *śuddha nṛttam*, a type of 'pure', technical dance performed by women.[137] Other inscriptions make mention of *tēvaṭiyāḷ* singing *tōci* (Skt. *doṣa* 'fault; harm') songs: these may be connected with the several types of songs that the devadasis used to sing in accompaniment to the waving of the pot-lamp.[138] Several inscriptions register provisions for the singing of *Tiruvempāvai*, *Tēvāram* and *Tiruppatiyam*[139] or for the playing of the *vīṇā*.[140] In how far the term *cākkaikkūttu* is related to the performing art *Cākyarkkūttu* of Kerala[141] is hard to say but the assumption that a careful study of those performing arts that continue to exist mainly on the village level would throw light on the history and coherence of South Indian performing arts seems beyond doubt.

A literary base of the various traditions of performing arts of the Chola period is provided by texts like *Pañcamarapu*, *Kūttanūl* and the commentaries on *Cilappatikāram*; the first commentary is an anonymous work called *Arumpatavurai* (11th century A.D.); the author reveals a high proficiency in the performing arts and presents a number of verses for music and dance from the treatises existing in his time.[142] The second commentary on the *Cilappatikāram* is by Aṭiyārkkunallār (12th-13th cen. A.D.). The *Pañcamarapu* dates from the end of the 9th century A.D.[143] It distinguishes five 'main natures' of performing arts: *icai* (*music*), *vācciya* (word), *nirutta* (dance), *avinaya* (mime) and *tāḷa marapu* (rhythm). The third 'main nature' (*nirutta*) is subdivided into: 1. *nirutta vakai* (types of dance), 2. *tāṇṭava* (manly, heroic), 3. *akamārkkapporuḷ* ('subject matter of the way of *akam*'): *cati varalāṟu* (probably meaning *jati* dance phrases), 4. *akamārkkapporuḷ*: *taru varalāṟu* (probably meaning *daru*[144]), *pāṭalkaḷ* (songs), *veṇpā* (*veṇpā* metre), 5. *kūttilakkaṇa* ('script for drama').

A work *Kūttanūl* is mentioned by Aṭiyārkkunallār; if this work is the same as the *Kūttanūl* that is available to us, then a date before the 12th century may be assumed.[145] This treatise on the art of dance is divided into nine books, out of which only the first two have been edited. The contents of the entire work are said to comprise: *Cuvai nūl*—the book of aesthetic 'tastes'; *Tokai nūl*—dictionary of dance forms, among which the 108 *tāṇḍavas* of Śiva are mentioned; *Vari nūl*—folk dances, divided into *puṟa vari* (dances representing various natural phenomena in terms of *Aintiṇai*)[146], and *aka vari* dances pertaining to love-psychology. Besides the two genres of *puṟam* and *akam* thematic dances, *vari nūl* lists further *mukha vari*—exhibitional and acrobatic dances, and *vacai vari*—ludicrous dances; *Kalai nūl*—the book of measurements of the body. This is the largest book containing more than 1000 *sūtras* on anatomical divisions of the human body; *Karaṇa nūl*—treatise on dance sequences; *Tāḷa nūl*—the book on time measure and rhythmic patterns;[147] *Icai nūl*—music book describing, for instance, 30 extinct *paṇs* (melody-types) some of which are used by the *Tēvāram* composer-saints;[148] *Avai nūl*—book on architecture of the theatre, on rules for light, curtains, dress, make-up etc.; *Kaṇ nūl*: aim of dance, *yoga* through dance, medicines, ointments and exercises to keep the body and voice healthy and strong; meditation for dancers, and *mokṣa* (liberation from the chain of rebirths).

It is obvious that these two texts and both commentaries on *Cilappatikāram* can be regarded as extremely important sources for the study of South Indian performing arts. The data gathered from these works may fill up the gap between the information about performing arts found in the *Cilappatikāram*, the Sanskrit texts on these arts[149], and the artistic practice as it has come down to us.[150]

Conclusions

The cultural milieu of the Chola period can be characterised by the following summary: 1. Along with the imperialistic expansion goes the growth of political power of the ruler. His authority is expressed in two *foci*: his court and the temple, especially temples serving the purpose of a sacred platform for the imperial coronation ritual. 2. The opulence of the ruler results in liberal generosity to the temples and in the establishment of an impressive court. Both expand into large, cultural, social and economic centres, creating at the same time employment, bonded labour and slavery.[151] 3. Consolidation of Hindu devotionalism expressed in the institutionalisation of ritual tasks, offices and performances, and in the literary attempts at establishing an 'official' corpus of devotionalism. Examples of this tendency are the hagiography *Periyapurāṇam* that is regarded as the 'national Tamil epos'[152], and the innumerable *purāṇas* that emerge from Chola times onwards. 5. The cultural content of the temple ritual comprises both Sanskrit traditions in the rituals performed by Brahmins and Tamil traditions in the form of sing-

ing of devotional poetry of the Pallava-Pandya period and of performing arts based on the indigenous tradition.

However, "between the lines" we also read the continuation of the old bardic tradition of dealing with the divine through 'dramatic performance': apart from the offerings of artistic nature discussed above we also hear of a *tiruvāykkēḷvi* ('question to the sacred mouth') and of a *caṉṉāliyal* (probably meaning "making noise while moving in convulsions" from Ta. *caṉṉi*+*āli*).[153] Inscriptions testify that the god *Vītiviṭaṅkaṉ* of Tiruvarur speaks through the *tiruvāykkēḷvi* ordering a grant of land to the shrine of *Tikkuniṟainta Piḷḷaiyār* who is 'our son'.[154] The *tiruvāykkēḷvi* is mentioned as well in the inscriptions from the great temple of Tanjore.[155] The term *caṉṉāliyal* reminds us not only of the bardic practice of divination and exorcism of the afflicting divine by means of *veṟiyāṭal*, it resembles as well the methods of dealing with possession and calamities in village cults of the 20th century which we will discuss later in more detail.

These references indicate that the old bardic milieu continued to exist even within the context of the 'official' culture of Hindu fusion that was laid down in both Sanskrit and Tamil literature. This symbiosis and continuation is characteristic for the 'historical modification' of the devadasi tradition.

3. *Vijayanagara Period*

Historical data

In 1318 A.D. the Muslim invader Mubarak of Delhi captured the Hindu prince Haripāla Deva, flayed him alive and set up his head at the gate of his own city (Devagiri). This event illustrates the cruelty and ruthlessness that accompanied the conquest of the Hindu South by the Muslim forces from the North of India in the thirteenth and beginning of the fourteenth century. With the ascension of Muhammad Bin Tughlakh of Delhi in 1325 A.D. the massacre of Hindus and the destruction of Hindu culture increased; from travellogues and other records of those times[156] we hear of the tremendous wealth which the invaders carried off. Terror spread through the entire South. The threat of the extinction of Hindu culture, religion and law resulted in an unexpectedly strong opposition by three allied Hindu states by the middle of the fourteenth century.

In 1336 the first king of a new Hindu state, Harihara I, was crowned in the new capital called Vijayanagara ('City of Victory'), situated on the Southern bank of the river Tungabhadra. He was succeeded by his brother Bukka who reigned for thirty years to be followed by his son Harihara Deva II. During this formative period, the entire South seems to have submitted itself rather peacefully to the new defenders of Hindu culture. The height of the Vijayanagara empire was reached during the reign of Krishnadeva Rāya who was crowned emperor in 1509. The strength of this empire was however broken in 1565 A.D. when emperor Rāmarāya (1542-65 A.D.) was defeated by the Muslim forces in the battle of Talikota (1565 A.D.).

Sources

The importance of the Vijayanagara empire in the role of the defender of Hindu culture against the Muslim onslaught was felt in three ways in the Tamil-speaking part of South India. Firstly, the Vijayanagara rule provided the necessary protection and support for the practically undisturbed continuation of Tamil Hindu culture. Secondly, the centralisation of political power of Vijayanagara necessitated the advent of deputies to represent the government locally in Tamilnadu; these were assigned military fiefs from which they drew revenue. The deputy-rulers were called *Nāyakas* and belonged mostly to the Telugu and Kannada nobility. In this way Tamilnadu was inevitably drawn into direct contact with the larger span of South Indian culture. One of the very significant results of the Nāyaka rule over the South was that Telugu was adopted as court language. A third impact of Vijayanagara rule on Tamil culture was the strong bias of the emperors towards Sanskrit, Sanskrit lore and Brahmin erudition and traditions.

Tamil literature

In the field of Tamil literature we may discern four striking developments that characterise the Vijayanagara period. In the first place we see a continuation of the tradition of anthologisation and of learned writing in the form of a number of technical works like grammars, lexicographies, commentaries on bardic literature and treatises on music and dance.[157] Secondly, a 'revolutionary' change took place in the field of Tamil poetry[158]: the syllable based and *mātrā*-oriented prosody of Sanskrit poetry was superimposed upon the *acai*-based system of Tamil metres. When this process had reached its completion by the 15th century the Tamil poem had usually acquired a double prosodic organisation: in terms of *acais* or 'original' Tamil metrical units, and in terms of long and short syllables. Due to this process the relation between the literary text and its vocal rendering became even closer than the original association of text and melody (*paṇ*) since the rhythmical quality of the text provided a sense of *tāḷam* (rhythmical pattern).[159] This major change in the metrics of Tamil poetry is best illustrated in the work of the devotional poet Aruṇakirinātar (ca. 1425/50 A.D.). Although his poetry resembles typologically the *bhakti* poets of the Pallava times, Aruṇakirinātar's work expresses a mature fusion of two cultures: the Tamil and the Sanskritic in all aspects of language and diction, motifs and themes, mythological imagery and metrical system. "Some of his stanzas are full of supreme sensuousness and coined in very daring language and baroque imagery while others are simple and of deep mystical meaning "[160] Both form and content show the blend of two cultural traditions.

The third characteristic development of Tamil literature in the Vijayanagara and subsequent period is the enormous growth of local *purāṇas* (*sthalapurāṇas*). This indicates, on the one hand, the continued process of incorporation of new material and redefinition of the old, and, on the other hand, it provides new myths and religious 'history' around the numerous new tem-

ples that arose since the time of the Cholas. Indigenous *purāṇas* as well as Tamil versions of pan-Indian *purāṇas* were received with great enthusiasm and formed the subject-matter for devotional plays that were performed inside and outside the temple precincts.

In the fourth place Tamil literature is ascribed a new 'supergenre' called *prabandha* (Skt. 'tie, connection', Ta. *pirappantam* 'connected discourse; connected narrative').[161] Up to this date no plausible inner logic of classification within this supergenre has been found or suggested. Traditionally, ninety-six varieties of *prabandhas* are enumerated. This number of 96 dates from approximately the 16th century, coinciding with the end of the Vijayanagara empire. An earlier pre-Vijayanagara grammar called *Paṉṉirupāṭṭiyal* written by Kuṇavīra (1178-1218 A.D.) gives only 36 varieties of *prabandhas*.[162] In an attempt to analyse the character of the 96 types of compositions one encounters a very uneven total that differs significantly in cultural provenience, historical background, linguistic identity and platform of performance. The varieties of *prabandhas* that are overtly related to classical Tamil culture are most clearly recognisable. A number of compositions are directly related to the bardic *akam*-genre (like *akapporuṭkōvai*, *tūtu*, *maṭal*, *ulāmaṭal*, *kaikkiḷaimālai* and *kātal*), others to *puṟam*-literature (like *tuyileṭainilai*, *āṟṟuppaṭai*, *paraṇi* and *maṟam*); we can possibly recognise compositions from the devotional literature that was created during the Pallava period (like *antāti*, *akaval*, *patikam* and *ulā*). The real confusion arises, however, when we distinguish specimens of folk literature derived from oral and so-called 'little' tradition[163]. Previously such works were dealt with in a sophisticated manner, like the various songs that accompany the games of girls and women that were taken up by Māṇikkavācakar. In the Vijayanagara and subsequent period this tendency brought forth many written forms of folk or oral literature (like *piḷḷaittamiḻ*). Other disturbing categories are those of learned writing (like *alaṅkārapañcakam*), didactic writing (like *vāyuraivāḻttu*), praise poetry serving a patron, a deity or the 'ideal' chaste woman (like *mēykkīrttimālai*, *perumakiḻccimālai*), and those compositions that are influenced by Sanskrit literature (like *aṉupūti*) or which are more or less straight borrowings from Sanskrit like *aṭṭamaṅkalam*, *kēcātipātam* and *catakam*.[164]

The inorganic growth from the point of view of Tamil literature of the number of *prabandhas* from 36 to 96 in the course of Vijayanagara rule over Tamilnadu seems to indicate that the final number of 96 was no more than a 'stock-taking' of all new varieties of literary expression that had entered both Tamil culture and the mainstream of written composition. This may have happened out of spontaneous interest, out of necessity in the case of praise poems, or as an automatic result of diffusion from the surrounding cultural milieu. The clues for the discovery of an organic growth of the bulk of *prabandhas* seems therefore to lie outside Tamilnadu and might be found in the inevitable contact with non-Tamil literatures in vogue during the Vijayanagara empire.

The *prabandhas* have proven to be of utmost importance for the for-

mation of the devadasi repertoire; it shows a similar mixture of archaic, classical Tamil compositions, folk specimens, Sanskrit descriptive poems, praise poems and *maṅkalams* ('auspicious' verses on gods and goddesses). The category of 'dramatic' literature has its firm roots in the bulk of *prabandhas*; it rose to importance especially in the period of the Tanjore courts as we will see later.

Social and economic conditions

The fact that the Vijayanagara empire had, to a great extent, originated from the fear of extinction of Hindu culture by Muslim agressors, resulted in a very self-conscious form of Hinduism. This cultural self-consciousness did express itself not only by a clear distinction of religious, philosophical and artistic values, but also by an increase of caste-distinctions and caste-consciousness. Social groups and communities, occupational groups and communinities, and religious sects were often seriously disputing among themselves particular social rights and privileges.

Naturally, in this Hindu revival the rank position was taken by the Brahmins who occupied almost all important administrative and political positions at the court of the Vijayanagara rulers. Artisans were divided into 74 sub-divisions[165], among whom the Kammalar enjoyed the right of *pāvāṭai* ('petticoat', cloth spread on the ground in honorary decoration) and *parivaṭṭam* (ritual headcloth). The latter is one of privileges of the devadasis of Tiruvarur as well and is enjoyed even today by their descendants (see photograph 2, p. 143).[166] The Kaikkolans were allowed to make use of the privilege of using *taṇṭu* (palanqueen) and *śaṅkha* (conch) which indicates the high respect in which they were held.[167] Until recent times each Kaikkolan family of Coimbatore was expected to supply one daugher for dedication as a devadasi to the temple.[168] Places like Tiruvarur have been famous for the Kaikkolan community, and even up to this day, a festival is held during which the inner corridors of the great temple are covered with newly woven cloth and fruits supplied by this community.[169]

The complex growth of caste and of community consciousness may be due to the establishment of a strong, central government at the capital of the Vijayanagara empire and, the rigid control which its bureaucracy exercised over all provinces.

A second result of the role of the Vijayanagara rulers as defenders of Hindu culture versus Muslim culture was a renewed North-South polarisation. Previously, the Dravidian South had evidently existed in contrast to the Aryan North until an almost complete fusion had been accomplished in the post-Kalabhra period. This new polarisation opposed the Hindu South against the Muslim North; the Vijayanagara empire did inherit not only the various local cultures of the South, including Kerala, Karnataka, Andhra and Tamilnadu, it also inherited the wealth of the Cholas and their maritime contacts. These two factors were a solid base for material wealth and cultural amalgamation which enabled the Vijayanagara empire to form and maintain

a distinct South Indian identity. Especially in the field of music and dance it is possible to discern the formulation of a well-defined South Indian tradition which is referred to as 'Karṇāṭic' tradition.

Continuation of heroic norms within Hinduism

The nature of the Vijayanagara empire as a 'buffer-state' emphasised the role of the emperor as the victorious defender of Hindu *dharma* (code of life) and made his court the center of political power and cultural life; eventually the ruler became of such cultic importance that his rule was equated with that of the god Rāma.

The victorious aspect of the emperor is of great interest for our investigation of the modifications of the devadasi-*nityasumaṅgalī*. According to the travel-account of Domingo Paes (ca. 1510 A.D.)[170], a nine-day festival was conducted in the palace in a special enclosure called the 'House of Victory'. On the last day the king seats himself on a throne on a daīs, after which the following ritual ensues:

"There the king sits, dressed in white clothes all covered with (embroidery of) golden roses and wearing his jewels—he wears a quantity of these white garments, and I always saw him so dressed—and around him stand his pages with his betel, and his sword, and the other things which are the insignia of state. Many Brahmans stand around the throne on which rests the idol fanning it with horsetail plumes, the handles of which are all overlaid with gold; these plumes are tokens of the highest dignity; they also fan the king with them.[171] (.....) In all this portion of the day nothing more is done than this wrestling and dancing of the women, but as soon as ever the sun is down many torches are lit (.....). When the cars have gone out they are immediately followed by many horses covered with trappings and cloths of very fine stuff of the king's colours, and with many roses and flowers on their heads and necks, and with their bridles all gilded; and in front of these horses goes a horse with two state-umbrellas of the king, and with grander decorations than the others, and one of the lesser equerries leads it by the bridle. In front of this horse goes another caroling and prancing, as do all horses, being trained in that art. You must know that this horse that is conducted with all this state is a horse that the king keeps, on which they are sworn and received as kings, and on it must be sworn all those that shall come after them; and in case such a horse dies they put another in its place. If any king does not wish to be sworn on horseback, they swear him on an elephant, which they keep and treat with equal dignity. (.....) As soon as they (i.e. the horses) are arranged in this way (with the king's horse in front of them, all facing the king) and are all quiet, there goes out from the inside of the palace a Brahman, the highest in rank of those about the king, and two others with him, and this chief Brahman carries in his hands a bowl with a coconut and some rice and flowers, while others carry a pot of water; and they pass around by the back of the horses, which all stand facing the king; and after performing his ceremonies there, he returns to the palace. After this is over you will see issuing from the inside twenty-five or thirty female door-keepers, with canes in their hands and whips on their shoulders; and then, close to these come many eunuchs, and after these eunuchs come many women playing trumpets and drums and pipes (but not like ours) and viols, and many other kinds of music, and behind these women will come

some twenty women-porters, with canes in their hands all covered with silver, and close to them come women clothes in the following manner (.....).[172] They carry in their hands *vessels of gold* each as large as a small *cask of water*; inside these are some loops made of pearls fastened with wax, and inside all this is a *lighted lamp*. They come in regular order one before the other, in all perhaps sixty women fair and young, from sixteen to twenty years of age. (.....) In this manner and in this array they proceed *three times round* the horses and at the end retire into the palace.[173]

This rather lengthy passage is given here because it shows all cultural markers that are of importance in our study: 1. the worship of an idol[174], combined with that of the victorious king and of that of his horse, and, 2. the mode of worship which resembles the temple-festival procession (*utsava*); in temple worship, the removal of evil eye[175] or of other bad influences (*dṛṣṭiparihāra*) by means of waving the pot-lamp (*kumbhadipa*) was performed by devadasis during daily ritual and at the return of the processional image to the temple. In fact, this ritual is common to all levels of South Indian culture. In this instance the same rite is executed by a type of devadasi-*nityasumaṅgalī* in royal service. The feature that is characteristic for the Vijayanagara rule is, on the one hand, the grandeur with which the ceremony is performed, and on the other hand, the direct identification of the Divine, victory, the king and his horse. This emphasis on the prowess of the king and his divine capacity to obtain victory resembles closely the ideals expressed by bardic poets of the *Caṅkam* age. It is therefore not surprising to see the old 'goddess of victory', Koṟṟavai, resuming a place of vital importance. The travellogues of Nuniz and Paes[176] describe in great detail the nine day festival celebrations that were concluded by the worship of the goddess of victory on the tenth day (*Vijayadaśamī*). The military display, the worship of the king and his horse, the slaughter of innumerable animals throughout the festival for the idol in the 'house of victory' remind us of the sacrifices that were demanded by Koṟṟavai, and that are demanded still by a number of ferocious goddesses in the village cults of today.[177]

The refinement of cultural life and artistic standards is clear from the same accounts. The arts of dance and music were greatly encouraged. Mention it made of several types of dancers. The travellogues distinguish between dancing women, court dancers and temple dancers. Paes describes the devadasis of a Gaṇeśa temple as follows[178]:

"They feed the idol every day, for they say that he eats; and when he eats women dance before him who belong to that pagoda, and they give him food and all that is necessary, and all girls born of these women belong to the temple. These women are of loose character, and live in the best streets that there are in the city; it is the same in all their cities, their streets have the best rows of houses. They are very much esteemed, and are classed amongst those honoured ones who are the mistresses of the captains; any respectable man may go to their houses without any blame attaching thereto."

The palace-dancers are described by the same author thus[179]:

"The women begin to dance, while some of them place themselves in the circular galleries that I have said were (erected) at their gate of entrance. Who can fitly describe to you the great riches these women carry on their persons?—collars of gold with so many diamonds and rubies and pearls, bracelets also on their arms and on their upper arms, girdles below, and of necessity anklets on the feet (.....) there are women among them who have lands that have been given to them, and litters, and so many maid-servants that one cannot number all their things."

Apart from these dancers, the palace employed many other types of female servants. The king was said to have twelve lawful wives, one of whom was a courtesan.[180] Each of the wives had sixty maid-servants at her disposal; in addition to them there were women employed in the palace who knew how to handle sword and shield, to wrestle, and to play various martial instruments. The total of women in the palce amounted to twelve thousand.

Naturally, the variety of female artists belonging to the palace must have been considerable, and cannot be traced in detail. It is, however, clear that the palace-dancers were held in great respect by the king as they were allowed to chew betel in front of him, which no one was allowed to do apart from dancing women and wrestlers.[181] Their art was generously supported and great attention was given to the training of dancers. A special hall for instruction was built inside the palace which contained panels that showed the proper positions and that contained bars which were used for the physical training of the dancers.[182] A manual on dance was written by Goppa Tippa who was employed by the Vijayanagara court.[183]

The art of music was supported and cultivated as well by the Vijayanagara rulers. Several theoretical works on music were written during this period.[184] It was this cultural milieu that brought forth the founders of Karṇāṭic music: the four generations of Tāllapakam composers, beginning with Annamācārya (1408-1503 A.D.), the *Dāsa Kūṭa* among whom Purandara Dāsa (1484-1564 A.D.) is well known for his formulation of a basic training in vocal music. This basic course was the 'official' start of the distinctly individual development which South Indian music came to follow in contrast to the music of the North.

The later period of Vijayanagara rule was characterised by the ascendancy of Sri Vaishnavism as the 'state-religion'. Whereas the earlier rulers had considered Siva, in the form of Virūpākṣa, their tutelary deity, later kings became Vaishnavas with a predilection for Śrī Veṅkaṭeśa of Tirupati and for Śrī Raṅganātha of Srirangam. With the ascendancy of Veṅkaṭa II (1586-1614 A.D.), Śrī Veṅkaṭeśa officially took the place of Śrī Virūpākṣa. The shift from Saivism to Vaishnavism is, may be, connected with the altered needs of the state, namely from expansive war-fare to the defence and stabilisation of the established power.[185] The splenderous court-life and the identification of the later rulers with Vaishnava gods like Kṛṣṇa and Rāma are

significant for the cultural milieu. They coincide with the thematic change in music and dance compositions towards *madhura bhakti*, a devotion of sweet eroticism, that stands in marked contrast to that of the *vaṉtoṇṭar*, the fierce devotees of the Pallava-Pandya period of Saiva *bhakti*.[186]

Conclusions

The central role of the victorious ruler, the protector of Hindu *dharma*, brought Vijayanagara nearer to a war-state than any other earlier Hindu kingdom.[187] This position of the king was characterised by an emphasis on his heroic strength on the one hand, and on his royal splendour in court on the other hand. In both fields we encounter devadasi-*nityasumaṅgalīs*, in the first place to protect the king's immunity to evil influences and in the second place to adorn his court. The divine base of the valour of and protection by the king is acknowledged in the generous support to temples. In these centres of religious culture we encounter a great variety of devadasis 'proper': the *Śrīraṅgam Kōyil Oḻuku* ('chronicle of the Śrīrangam temple)[188] makes mention of devadasis who had the right to *kuṭamuṛai* ('carrying pots of water in the divine presence'), and of *viṣṇudāsīs* and *rājadāsīs* who danced in front of the divine image during a temple procession, while others performed mime to vocal music (*abhinaya*).[189] The total variety of female artists employed by the various political-religious centres may have reached its peak during the Vijayanagara period.

The general cultural milieu was marked by an intensive exchange in virtually all spheres of culture. For the first time, the entire South was united under one central rule which facilitated mutual exchange, and in certain cases led to inevitable influences on local cultures. The advent of the Telugu and Karnataka deputees left a deep mark on Tamil music, dance and literature as well as the preference of the rulers for Brahmin lore and traditions.

It seems that devadasis were held in high esteem in all layers of cultural expression. Their repertoire absorbed a great number of musical and dance compositions that were in vogue during the Vijayanagara period; this fact is attested by the multivalence and divergent character of those ritual compositions that have come down to us.

A.3. Period of the Tanjore courts and subsequent developments till independence

Historical data

After the collapse of the Vijayanagara empire in the battle of Talikota (1565 A.D.) the border of Hindu territory was shifted southwards. While the descendants of the Vijayangara rulers tried to restore the old empire, the regents in the South (i.e. the Nāyakas) proclaimed their independence and founded their own kingdoms. Thus the courts of Madurai, Tanjore and Gingee, among others, gained an independent status and inherited the role of the 'defender of Hindu culture' from their former overlords.

Amidst of the political strife of the local rulers and the attacks from Mus-

lim forces, Tanjore maintained its independence till 1649 A.D. In the meantime, however, a new Hindu dynasty had arisen to defend Hinduism against the hated Muslim oppression. This new dynasty, of Maratha descent, established itself in Tanjore in 1676 A.D. Since the first Maratha king (Ekoji I 1676-1683 A.D.) this dynasty ruled over Tanjore till its annexation by the British in 1856 A.D.

In short, between 1565 A.D. and 1856 A.D. Tanjore continued with only a brief gap, to be a Hindu kingdom; a fact which was indeed striking under the current political circumstances that were marked not only by continuous attempts of the Muslim rulers to conquer the South, and by the mutual intrigues among the southern kings, but also by a third increasingly disturbing factor, namely that of the European traders of several nationalities who tried to obtain exclusive rights of settlement along political roads. In fact, the survival of Tanjore as a centre of Hindu culture for three centuries can be regarded as the result of a play of political 'chance and necessity' based on a complex balance of internal and external competitive groups of opposing cultural, religious and economic interests. This character of the Tanjore kingdom is in great contrast with the role and power of the Vijayangara empire. The latter could draw its strength from an imperial structure that united the entire South, and from economic resources that stretched beyond the Indian continent[190], whereas the former could maintain only a rather perilous balance that was based on a territory not larger than the former Tanjore fief of the Vijayanagara empire. This aspect forced the Tanjore rulers to stay in a kind of 'relic position' which left no scope for expansion and initiative but only for amalgamation of different streams of culture, consolidation and preservation. Tanjore became rather a center of court-culture than a military stronghold anchored in a powerful ruler.

After the annexation of Tanjore by the British, its role of the patron of arts, intelligentsia and religion was partly taken over by yet smaller courts like those of Pudukottai and of Ettayapuram, or by courts as far away as Trivandrum, Mysore and Baroda; the trade-center of Madras offered an alternative that was altogether new. The far-reaching consequences of the *disappearance of the royal patron* will be discussed later on.

Sources

While investigating the literary activity during the Tanjore courts, we must keep in mind the fact that it was composed of literatures bound to various languages. Since the first Nāyaka envoys in the 14th century the court language had been Telugu. This tradition was apparently so strong that the Maratha kings continued the use of Telugu as the court medium. However, the kings themselves composed in Telugu as well as in Marathi. Another linguistic preference that had been inherited from the Vijayanagara period was the strong bias towards Sanskrit and Brahmin traditions. Thus, Tamil is likely to have been assigned rather a secondary place at the Tanjore court.[191]

This hypothesis coincides with the further developments of the *prabandha* genre.[192] Tamil sought now to express in written forms literary traditions that had remained so far in oral renderings only. Oral literature had always been closely related to the performing arts which functioned as its medium of transmission. One of the characteristic features of traditional performing arts in India is their twofold capacity of retaining old, archaic forms and, at the same time, adapt these to the cultural influences of the moment. The various types of *prabandhas* that emerged during the Tanjore period all share this feature. The *kīrttaṉai* (or *kīrttaṉam*<Skt. *kīrtana*, *kīrtanā* 'song of praise'), *cintu* (closely related to the *kīrtana*), *viṟaliviṭutūtu* ('sending the *viṟali* as messenger')[193], *kuṟavañci* (alias *kuṟam* or *kuṟattippāṭṭu* 'song of the gypsy woman'), *paḷḷu* (cf. *paḷḷaṉ*—member of a caste of untouchable agricultural labourers) and *ūñjal* (alias *ūcal* 'swing song') are old or even classical forms[194] to which we find references in earlier literature or which can be traced back to very early antecedents[195] but which appear for the first time as independent literary compositions during the Tanjore period. In the 'new' genre of 'operatic ballets' like *kuṟavañci*, *prabandham* (as a specific composition) and *nāṭakam* we find song and dance sequences that belong to Kannada, Telugu and Tamil traditions.[196]

The emergence of these compositions in the literary output of Tamil is called by K.V. Zvelebil the second 'revolutionary' change after the superimposition of the *mātrā*-oriented prosody on the *acai*-based system of Tamil metres.[197] 'These works created in the 17th-19th centuries, but mostly between 1750-1850, have some diagnostic features in common: (1) The main motifs are primarily religious, based frequently on popular devotional legends; (2) all of these works are written so that they may be set to music; (3) almost all of them are so composed as to be fit for being enacted as street plays; (4) the authors were traditional scholars, not folk bards or popular minstrels; (5) the works enrich metrical patterns and experiment with prosody, which is of the mixed *acai* and *mātrā* based variety and shows close relationship with songs and music; (6) as for the language and diction they strive after easily intelligible Tamil.'[198] It is especially in these works that we see the fusion of the innumerable local *purāṇas* as subject matter of oral traditions with a new form of written literature expressed through the various performing arts.

Performing arts

For a detailed account of the developments of music and dance that took place during the Tanjore period we would like to refer to the expert publications of Dr. S. Seetha, Prof. P. Sambamoorthy, Dr. V. Raghavan and others.[199] Within the context of the present publication we have to limit ourselves to the relation between these general developments and the tradition of the devadasis of those times.

The literary sources of this period refer to the devadasis mostly as a dancer-*cum*-singer in the first place; only rarely do we find any mention of the

other tasks that form an integral part of the devadasi tradition. Because of this pronounced interest in the artistic aspect of the tradition, it is not surprising to recognise the majority of vocal and dance compositions that constitute the repertoire of the devadasis, as it is known to us in the 20th century, as compositions belonging to the music and dance culture of the Tanjore period. Therefore we will take a closer look at the state of these arts during the times of the Tanjore courts.

Music

The culture of the Tanjore courts can be considered as an uninterrupted continuation of the court-culture of the Vijayanagara period. Added to this continuation of artistic sophistication was the fact that Tanjore was at certain times[200] the only protected Hindu territory in the South. This happy combination of cultural and political circumstances drew many artists and the intelligentsia from the entire former Vijayanagara empire to Tanjore. Especially in the field of music and dance these two factors were of major importance.

The musical system that is referred to nowadays as 'Karṇāṭic' music was inherited from the Kannada musician, saint and poet Śrī Purandara Dāsa (1484-1564 A.D.). He fixed the basic scale (*rāga māyāmāḷavagauḷa*) for a number of vocal exercises and a gradual course of vocal compositions which came to be regarded as the standard basic training for musicians. Due to the intensive cultural exchange during the period of the Vijayanagara empire this basic course of music was well accepted in Tamilnadu by the time of the Tanjore courts. The three most famous classical composers of Karnatic music, Śyāma Śāstrī (1762-1827 A.D.), Muttusvāmī Dīkṣitar (1775-1835) and Tyāgarāja (1759 or 1767-1874), based their musical compositions on this tradition.

All three composers were born in Tiruvarur in Brahmin families. However, the *ūr* (native place or ancestral place) of the three composers was widely different: Śyāma Śāstrī's family hailed from Kanchipuram where his father was a priest (*arcaka*) for the goddess Kāmākṣī; Muttusvāmī Dīkṣitar's parents came from Virinchipuram (Tamilnadu), and Tyāgarāja's family belonged to a group of Telugu Brahmins. All three families had moved to the Tanjore area because of political disturbances and settled down in Tiruvarur. The choice of Tiruvarur was probably motivated by the fact that this famous, ancient center of religious activity was the abode of the family deity, Srī Tyāgarājasvāmī, of the Maratha kings.

The combined factors of a rich cultural heritage from the Vijayanagara period, the 'insular safety' of Tanjore in a period of political unrest which resulted in the influx of the acumen of South Indian culture, and of the patronage of the Tanjore rulers of an ancient religious centre like Tiruvarur, were decisive for the developments in music and dance and, as a result, for the formation of the devadasi repertoire as it is known today. A most striking characteristic of the developments of music and dance during the Tanjore

period is the integration of the performing arts practised in the court and those practised in the temple. When we consider the rather 'rustic' and syncretistic character of devotional temple art in those centers that were relatively far removed from the Tanjore court, it becomes clear how decisive the patronage of the temple by the rulers of Tanjore and their ardent interest in the performing arts have been in the formation of the general performing arts and of those practised by the devadasis. The artistic exchange between the court and the temple seems to have been mutual. On the one hand it is traditionally known that the father of Muttusvāmī Dīkṣitar, Rāmasvāmī Dīkṣitar (1735-1817 A.D.) studied music with the devadasis of the Tiruvarur temple. As an artist in his own right he systematised and embellished the music that was played traditionally on the *nāgasvara* (a type of hoboe) in the same temple.[201] His son, on the other hand, did not only grace the court of Tanjore but also that of Ettayapuram and Maturai; at the same time we find references in his compositions to the devadasis of the Tyāgarājasvāmī temple of Tiruvarur.[202]) One of his students was a famous devadasi called Kamalam; for her first performance (*araṅkēṟṟam*) Muttusvāmī Dīkṣitar composed a *padavarṇam* in Telugu on Lord Tyāgarāja (*Rūpamu jūci* in *rāga tōḍi*) and a *daru* also in Telugu (*Nī sati daivamandu lēdani* in *rāga śrīrañjani*). Four famous dance-masters who were attached to the Tanjore court were present at this occasion. The traditional repertoire that used to be performed in Tiruvarur temple included as well compositions by king Śāhaji II (1684-1712 A.D.); two 'operatic ballets' were written by him: the *Pallakisēva prabhaṃdhamu*, and the *Viṣṇu pallakisēva prabhaṃdhamu*.[203] The first opera used to be enacted in the Tiruvarur temple by the devadasis. This tradition was maintained till the beginning of the 20th century. The devotional plot depicts the pining of the goddess Kamalāmbāḷ who resides in her private shrine in the North-East corner of the temple ground, for Lord Tyāgarāja who inhabits the central shrine of the temple. After elaborate descriptions of her love, Tyāgarāja's greatness and his divine court, the Lord consents to being carried in a palanquin (*pallaki*) to the shrine of the goddess. In fact, the opera gives a detailed description of the ritual called *pallaki sevā* ('offering of the palanquin'). Apart from the 'romantic' songs that remind us rather of the concert repertoire[204], the opera contains many songs and dances that were performed as separate ritual offerings by devadasis. Songs like *Lālilālayya lāli*, *Jayamaṅkaḷam*, *Cūṛṇikai* and *Pākāri* are found in the repertoire of devadasis of other temples as well.[205] Another 'operatic ballet', of a lighter nature, was composed in Tamil by an unknown author during the reign of Śāhaji II. This 'operatic ballet' called *Tyāgēśa Kuṟavañci* was performed as well by the devadasis of Tiruvarur temple. Both operas are still actively remembered by the last descendant of the devadasis of Tiruvarur, Smt. P.R. Thilagam. According to her tradition the heroine Rājamōhinī is no one else but king Śāhaji II himself as a cryptic proof of his authorship.[206]

It is important to realise the close co-operation of the court and the temple of its patron deity. In the earlier period of Maratha rule Śrī Tyāgarājasvāmī

of Tiruvarur was considered the patron deity of the royal house; later the king's devotion shifted to Śiva of the Bṛhatīśvara temple of Tanjore.[207] During the Tanjore period artistic sophistication was a strong binding factor between temple and court. The king composed 'operatic ballets' for ritual enactment in the temple; the most gifted composers lent their talents to both temple and court, and devadasis, too, seem to have been mutually interchangeable; the devadasis that taught music to Rāmasvāmī Dīkṣitar belonged to the group of *rājadāsīs* (servants of the king).[208] In 1847 A.D. the king of Tanjore sent a number of devadasis along with his daughter who was to marry the Maharaja Sayajirao III. These devadasis were removed from the temples of Tanjore and Kumbhakonam. Together with their musicians and dance-masters they formed a 'set' of Tanjore dancing-girls (usually called 'Tanjori nautch party') and were considered part of the wedding dowry of the princess.[209]

Dance

In traditional Indian performing arts there does not exist a very great difference between music and dance. The art of dance is basically a musical one. A distinction is made, though, between purely technical dance (*nṛtta*) which represents rhythmical patterns in choreography, and mimed dance (*nṛtya*) which is the emotional aspect of the music (*rāga*) translated into facial and gestural expression (*abhinaya*). Hence the developments that have been described above in the field of music hold as well in the field of dance. The Tanjore court inherited the rich tradition of dance in Tamilnadu that goes back to the *Caṅkam* period and added to this were the various forms of dance that entered Tamil culture during the Vijayanagara rule. It is clear from the records of the court of Vijayarāghava Nāyaka (1633-1673 A.D.) that the performing arts were generously supported. It is probable that we may date the first *kuṟavañci* called *Tañcaiveḷḷaipiḷḷaiyār* to his reign.[210] Other forms of dance-dramas like *yakṣagānas*, which originated in Karnataka, were very popular, as were the *padas* (devotional songs dwelling on the erotic aspect of *bhakti*). The famous *pada* composer Kṣetrayyā visited his court, too. In a manuscript entitled *Kṣetriya padamudu* we find references to the various *deśī* (non-classical) dance items that were danced in those times by courtdancers; their names and specialisation are given thus[211]:
1. Rūpavatī-*chaupada*, 2. Champakavaḷḷi-*śabda cintāmaṇi*, 3. Mūrti-*jakkini*, 4. Kōmalavaḷḷi-*korvai*, 5. Lokanāyakī-*nava pada*, 6. Ratnagiri-*darupada*, 7. Bhāgīratī-*pēraṇi*.[212] The degree of artistic refinement must have been impressive at the court of Vijayarāghava Nāyaka. This king rewarded one dancer called Pasupuleti Raṅgajammā with a *kanakābhiṣeka* ('ablution with gold'). Her accomplishment included the composition of prose works and poems in eight languages, *yakṣagānas* and *padas*.

The systematisation of the art of dance was performed by four brothers as late as the beginning of the 19th century. Ciṉṉaiyā (born ca. 1802), Poṉṉaiyā (born ca. 1804), Civāṉantam (born ca. 1808) and Vaṭivēlu (born ca.

1810) were—as far as we can know at present—the third in their generation of court choreographers and dance-masters. As a result of the general cultural atmosphere that was favourable to dance, and of their co-operation with Muttusvāmī Dīkṣitar, they were able to devise a basic course for dance training[213] and to compose a *balanced concert repertoire* that combined the choicest dance-compositions into a *harmonious concert program.*[214] A third task which they completed was the creation of several dance-compositions which were destined exclusively for temple rituals. These are the so-called *kautvam* (<Skt. *kavitva* 'poem') compositions danced in honour of several gods. One group is called *pañcamūrti kautvam* (*kautvam* for five gods, namely, Vināyaka, Murukaṉ, Campantar, Chandikeśvara and Naṭarāja) and another *navasandhi kautvam* (*kautvam* for the gods at the nine cardinal points of the temple ground: Brahmā, Indra, Agni, Yama, Nirṛti, Varuṇa, Vāyu, Kubera and Īśānya.[215] In later works we encounter the form *kautvam* used for the purpose of pacifying many other deities.[216] There can be no doubt that the Tanjore brothers, also referred to as Tanjore Quartet, made use of the ancient dance-traditions that were current in the temples in Tamilnadu during the period of the early Agamas.[217] The great contribution of this Quartet lies in the fact that they combined ancient Tamil traditions with new, imported forms and with aesthetic and cultural sophistication that was in vogue at the court.

Repertoire of the devadasis

The developments in the fields of music and dance that have been described strongly influenced the content and the degree of artistic sophistication of the repertoire of the devadasis performed in the temples of Tamilnadu. Without too much oversimplification one may state that the temples that were regarded as the shrines of the patron deity of the king became the cultural and artistic norm for other, ordinary temples. We find in several instances a similar collection of songs and dances in the repertoire of devadasis who belonged to widely differing temples. In all examples we find a combination of ritual songs and dances (like *maṅgalas, cūrṇikai* and *puṣpāñjali*) with sophisticated forms that are derived from the dance and music culture of the court, representing the upper layer of cultural life. Next to this sophisticated heritage there are a great number of compositions that belong to the layer of oral, non-classical, non-stylished traditions (like *tālāṭṭu* 'craddle song') or similar compositions with a certain amount of stylisation (like *ūñjal, tiruppaḷḷiyeḻucci*). Some of these compositions were meant to be sung in the temple while others were performed during social functions outside the frame of temple ritual (like *tamāś pāṭṭu* 'joke song'). A third stream of influence was the surrounding European culture. Even court culture was influenced by English and French music. Instruments like the violin and the harmonium have remained in use till this day. In the State documentary records[218] of the Tanjore rulers of 1855 we find the emoluments paid to the European and Indian musicians at the court, and

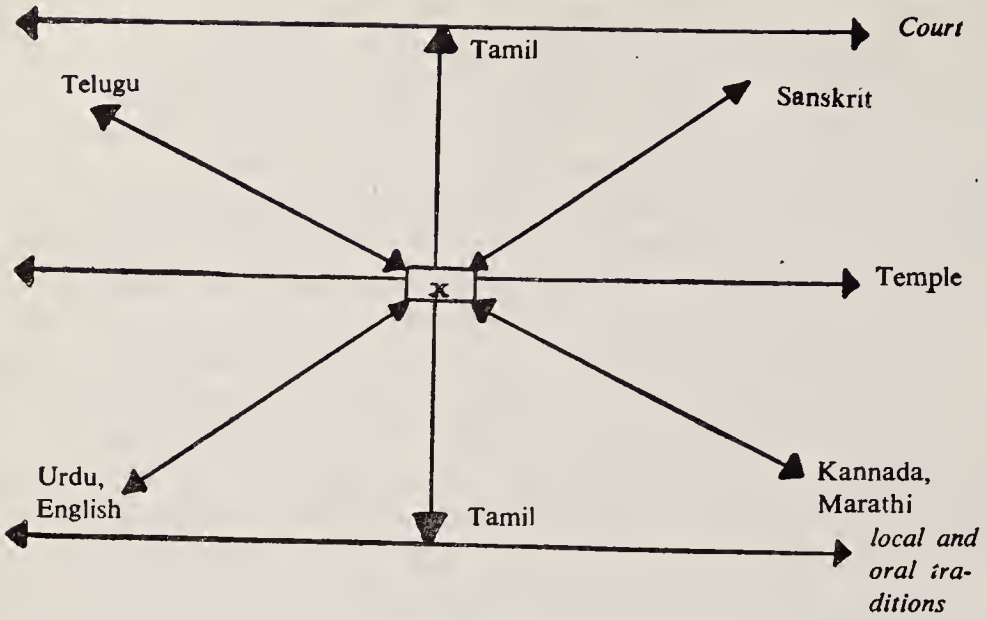
their period of service[219]; among them were listed: Isaac Johnson—violinist, Lady Catherine—dancer, Edward—teacher, Joseph White—tuner. The influence of such European artists can be found in composers of classical music[220] as well as in those who composed temple music. For example, a genre like *kōlāṭṭam* that combines musical notes (*svaras*) with simple dance steps (usually choreographed for a group performance) was set to English tunes, while the choreography resembled very much a slow English waltz.[221] At times the devadasis were called upon to welcome English officials by the performance of songs like 'God save the King'.[222]

In short, we can recognise a similar content of the repertoire of various temple devadasis; the individual division of the diverse streams of culture and the degree of artistic sophistication, however, differ widely. While the royal temples produced the most artistic and prestigious examples of devadasi repertoire, other temples preferred the combination of imitation of this 'high-standard' art with local, orally based songs-*cum*-dances, and *ad hoc* creation according to social or cultural necessity. A brief general survey of the type of compositions that form a 'standard' devadasi repertoire would comprise:
1. ritual songs and dances: language: mostly Sanskrit and Telugu, rarely Tamil; examples: *stotra* (praise poem), *puṣpāñjali* (ritual offering of flowers);
2. artistic compositions: language: mostly Telugu and Tamil; examples: *alārippū, varṇam, padam*;
3. devotional songs and dances: language: Tamil, Telugu; examples: *lāli* (lullaby), *tālāṭṭu* (craddle song);
4. festival compositions: language: Telugu, Tamil; example: *kōlāṭṭam, sarva vādyam* (all instruments and compositions);
5. Social compositions: a. of ritual nature: language: Sanskrit, Telugu; examples: *maṅgala nalaṅku*[223]; b. entertainment: language: Tamil, Telugu; examples; *tamāś pāṭṭu, gobbi pāṭṭu* (sung while clapping hands)[224] and *conta kavitvam* ('own compositions'). Several examples from the repertoire of the devadasis will be given within the pertinent socio-cultural context.[225]

The most characteristic feature of the repertoire of the temple devadasis, or devadasis 'proper' is its pivotal position in the music and dance culture of the Tanjore period. Graphically one may illustrate the art of the devadasis as functioning at the cross-roads of several strata of social, cultural, linguistic, and geographical nature (see *graph* 2, p. 46)

European sources

The developments in the artistic field during the Tanjore period were so striking that Indian sources refer to devadasis and art as identical. The other tasks that formed part and parcel of the devadasi tradition were practically entirely obliterated by information about the artistic accomplishments of the devadasis. An indirect proof of the continuation of the ritual tasks of the temple-dancers can be found in the ritual songs and dances that have been preserved in the repertoire.[226] Direct mention of these tasks is made by European travellers and missionaries.[227]



Graph 2:

The position of the repertoire of the devadasis (x) in the cultural milieu of the Tanjore period.

The French missionary Abbé Dubois (ca. 1770-1848 A.D.) who spent 31 years of his life in India, south of the Vindhya range, describes in his *Moeurs, Institutions et Cérémonies des Peuples de l'Inde* many aspects of devadasi life and traditions that had become less prominent than the artistic tasks derived from the court milieu of the 18th-19th century. In his account we recognise several customs that were prevalent in previous centuries and that were encountered by the authors Elmore and Whitehead in the 20th century in their investigation of village beliefs, cults and customs.[228]

The most salient feature of the devadasi tradition, the removal of evil influence through waving a lamp or coloured water (*ārati, ālam, kumbhārati*), is described by Dubois in detail and is explained thus[229]:

The *aratti* is one of the commonest of their religious practices, and is observed in public and in private. It is performed daily, and often several times a day, over persons of high rank, such as rajahs, governors of provinces, generals, and distinguished members of society. Whenever people in these positions have been obliged to show themselves in public, or to speak to strangers, they invariably call for the courtesans or dancing-girls from the temples to perform this ceremony over them, and so avert unpleasant consequences that might arise from the baleful glances to which they have been exposed. Kings and princes often have dancing-girls in their employ who do nothing else but perform this ceremony. The *aratti* is performed also for idols. After the dancing-girls have finished all their other duties in the temple, they never fail to perform this ceremony twice daily over the images of the gods to whom their services are dedicated. It is performed with even more solemnity when these idols have been carried through the streets, so as to turn aside the malignant influences, to which the gods are susceptible as any ordinary mortal.

The French priest is shocked by the fact that any connection with courtesans or dancers attached to the temple is favourably looked upon according to the following proverb: *Veśya darśanam puṇyam pāpa nāśanam*, which means literally 'to see a courtesan (or prostitute) is auspicious and the destruction of sin'.[230] This proverb does full justice to the devadasi as a *nityasumaṅgalī*, the ever-auspicious female. This auspiciousness is implored by society in the case of wedding ceremonies[231], in processions of the gods[232], and while carrying the sacred water to the temple.[233] Even after retirement from active temple-service the devadasis of Vaishnava temples were called *Kali-yuga-Lakṣmī* (goddess of prosperity in the worst world-period of *kali*)[234] and *Kali-yuga-Pārvatī* in Saiva temples.[235] The important function of the devadasis in South Indian temple ritual and society is well illustrated by another proverb: *ūrukku oru tēvaṭiyāḷ ārukku eṉṟu āṭuvāḷ*? 'The village has only one devadasi; for whom is she to dance?'[236] This proverb implies that she suffers from overwork because all want her services, and as such it is often used by married women who feel that the burden of the household rests only on their shoulders.

Conclusions

From European sources, ritual compositions occurring in the repertoire of the devadasis, and the abundant references to the tasks of the devadasis in the Agamas of this period[237], we may conclude that the basic function of the devadasi, i.e. to deal efficiently with the dangerous divine, continued during the rule of the Tanjore kings. These basic tasks became overshadowed in the public eye by the artistic performances of the devadasis both in the temple and in the court. The high degree of artistic sophistication was a result of the artistic developments that had increased since the independent status of the Tanjore rulers. The Tanjore court was one of the few remaining, flourishing Hindu patrons in almost entire India. Therefore it attracted the best of Hindu intelligentsia and artists. The result of this influx combined with the classical Tamil heritage and the Vijayanagara heritage was the amalgamation and consolidation of the best of South Indian performing arts. The commitment to the cause of Hindu art made up for the lack of military prowess of the rulers. The Tanjore kings were not in a position to recover South India as Hindu territory, nor were they well equipped to defend their own kingdom; as pointed out before, their peace and stability were based on a political play of 'chance and necessity'. This situation contained in itself not only the peak of Hindu artistic sophistication but also the seeds of decadence. The dependence of the artists, temples and devadasis was rooted in the patronage of a king who was politically speaking weak and subject to many external factors. This may be the reason why all those institutions and living traditions that were dependent on the royal patron declined so rapidly after the annexation of Tanjore by the British in 1856 A.D.

The more refined version of the devadasi-*nityasumaṅgalī* arose in the context of a strong, economically supported centre. We hear of devadasis

serving in temples from the times of the Pallavas onwards. The solid material provisions that the Chola empire endowed enabled the tradition to develop to a greater extent its artistic side. This rather sophisticated and artistic load of the devadasi tradition became more and more elaborate during the Vijayanagara empire and reached its peak in the artistic developments of the Tanjore courts where artists belonging to the court and those of the temple were practically interchangeable. Without a patron who could provide a living, shelter and platform for the display and the development of the arts, the tradition of devadasi-*nityasumaṅgalīs* was doomed to fall back onto the level from where it arose as early as the *Caṅkam* period: the level of village cults that maintain the central idea of an auspicious female dealing with the divine. This ritual attendance could be performed daily, *ad hoc* in the case of a crisis, or for specific occasions. An example of daily attendance is found in the *koṇṭimakalir* washing the shrine, decorating the *kantu* with flowers and lighting lamps. Ritual crises like possession and calamities require immediate attendance; examples of this attendance are found in *Caṅkam* literature and in the village cults that will be discussed further on. Occasional attendance is required in the case of processions, whether the object is a god or a king, precautions have to be taken to prevent and to erase the effects of evil eye.

The demands of the devadasi-artists that had been dependent on the king, his court and his temple, exceeded by far the provisions that would suffice for the ritual activities stated above. A frantic search for a new, equally munificent and able patron was an obvious necessity. However, it was mostly without result. Smaller courts like those of Ettayapuram, Pudukottai or Trivandrum could fulfil the role of patron-king only temporarily. An alternative was sought and to some extent found in the trade-settlement of Madras. This last attempt initiated an entirely new period in the development and appreciation of the traditional arts. In fact, with the loss of the royal patron an entire universe was lost and never recaptured. The aristocratic values of art, devotion and learning and their deeply cultured support by the court that continued an age-old tradition were exchanged for mercenary values, search for patronage of individuals and aggressive publicity. Another proverb aptly describes this development: *Kōvil cōṟṟukkuk kumaṭṭiṉa tēvaṭiyāḷ kāṭic cōṟṟukkuk karaṇam pōṭukiṟāḷ* 'The devadasi who [formerly] detested the rice of the temple, [now] turns a somersault to get a poor helping of rice'.[238] The devadasis and other artists were, however, not in the least to blame for these developments. The loss of the temple and king as patrons forced them to try to earn a living by means of their art; the prospect of being only a *nityasumaṅgalī* was not an attractive one for any person endowed with such highly developed tastes, artistry and intelligence. Therefore the capacity to sing and dance became essential for the livelihood and self-respect of the devadasis. As one informant remarked: "Art is all, we *must* know how to sing or how to dance, without it *no* one will respect us".[239] Even more painful, in this regard, was the gradual 'take-over' of the arts by members from other families

than devadasi families. This genuine injustice of society towards the devadasi artists, their artistic standards and integrity were brought to the attention of the general public only by a few people[240] during the *antinautch* campaign that sought to abolish the institution of the devadasis and to transfer the art onto 'respectable housewives'.

The truth is, however, that South Indian culture has always expressed the necessity of a *nityasumaṅgalī*, an ever-auspicious female who would effectively deal with the dangerous divine. The artistic capacity of the devadasi-*nityasumaṅgalī* gave her the respect of society that was necessary for her self-respect and livelihood. Without her art, she feared to sink back into the level of a mere *nityasumaṅgalī* with or without a legislation that forbade such institution. And, indeed, such *nityasumaṅgalīs* have not been eradicated; according to my opinion, they still exist in the cultural consciousness of the majority of South Indians even in our days.

B. Synchronic occurrence: socio-cultural foci

Introduction

In this second part of the first chapter we will investigate the spread of the *nityasumaṅgalī* throughout the different socio-cultural *foci* of Tamil culture. We have selected three such *foci* that may be considered representative for the main centres of cultural expression. We realise, however, that this distinction should be regarded only as a broad outline. As an expression of Hinduism the *nityasumaṅgalī*, too, may be defined as part of the continuum of Hinduisation that operates in both ways between the two poles of tribal religion and codified or "High" Hinduism. The character of a continuum is as important as the fact that the process of Hinduisation acts in both ways: it does not only mean that tribal elements are incorporated into Hinduism, but it also implies that features from Hinduism are integrated into tribal cults.[241] The unity does not exclusively reside in an exemplary set of norms and scriptures, such as those defined by Sanskritic Hinduism, or in an alternative "lower level" popular Hinduism of the less refined masses. The unity is to be found rather in the continuities that can be traced in the concrete media of song, dance, play, sculpture, painting, religious story and rite that connect the rituals and beliefs of the villager with those of the townsman and urbanite, one region with another, and the educated with the uneducated.[242] This approach may reveal to us the ever-differing adaptations of one basic 'concept' in the 'symbiotic unity' of Hindu tradition.[243] As such it would deserve an independent study: however, within the framework of the present publication it has been necessary to limit ourselves to three distinct *foci*:

1. The *focus* of oral traditions which may be considered to express the early, even prehistoric cults and beliefs, and which is still manifested in village cults.

2. The *focus* of Agamic temple traditions, present mostly between the 7th-20th century.

3. The *focus* of the court/patron culture, present in the *Caṅkam* period, as well as in the Hindu kingdoms of the 7th-20th century.

B. 1. *Focus of oral traditions*

Concepts about the divine and modes of worship as expressed in oral tradition of village cults

The topic of village beliefs and cults has long remained a barely investigated subject. The difficulties which such a research poses are manifold. An active knowledge of the spoken language of the informants is necessary since their religious legends are recited by wandering singers who attend the festivals and assist in the worship. These legends and myths are always recited from memory: and as the singers usually cannot read, written stories would be of no use to them.[244] Even if the scholar is capable of interviewing these 'bards' directly in their own language, it is necessary to remain in the area of investigation for a rather long time because of the irregularity with which the rituals and festivals are performed. Last but not least, it is most important to gain the confidence of the informants and the ritual specialists. This is perhaps the most difficult object to achieve because the ritual worship of the village gods is almost exclusively that of propitiation of dangerous deities who show their displeasure by inflicting diseases and other misfortunes on the villagers. No one will like to run the risk of incurring the anger of such gods by careless remarks about them, or even by attracting their attention. Therefore the majority of informants will pretend complete ignorance. This is not a worship that any one is proud of; questions are usually met with the reply that this type of worship belongs to out-caste and to the lower order of society. The Brahmins, however, have a considerable interest in these gods, and no doubt know more about them than they are willing to admit.[245] Brahmins quite commonly direct some parts of the worship, and often are present, usually standing at a distance. They admit that these deities are powerful demons and should therefore not be neglected. Moreover, they do actively worship those family gods (*kuladeva*) that belong to their ancestral place (*ūr*) and lineage (*kula*). Within these classifications the worship of these deities is linked to caste and sub-caste. Failures in life are often ascribed to the displeasure of these gods, however far the family in question may be from the ancestral place.

Types of gods

'Dravidian' gods are usually local in their origin.[246] Their history commonly begins on earth, often as the ghost of some deceased person, usually of someone who died an unexpectedly early, unjust or violent death. Even when one god is found in many places, the villagers do not think of it as a universal god but only as their local deity. Some deities are represented by an unhewn stone or crudely graven image but other deities, usually those who are considered to be very dangerous, will receive images that serve only the

occasion of worship and are disposed off immediately afterwards. Although there are a number of male deities, the majority of the village gods are considered to be female.[247] Among those goddesses we may distinguish dangerous and even malevolent goddesses on the one hand, and benign, friendly goddesses on the other. Within the first category it seems that the seven sisters, the *śaktis* and demons (*pēy*) are of increasingly more dangerous nature. The usual reason for worshipping these goddesses is the eruption of an epidemic disease like smallpox or plague, of draught or of cattle disease. The villagers interpret this as an expression of the anger of the goddesses; sometimes one of the villagers becomes possessed and speaks for the goddess, like in the case of the anger of the goddess Kanaka Durgamma. A woman will try to drown herself but is rescued by the villagers; she will then run to a margosa tree and breaking off twigs she will put them in her mouth as if she were a mad woman. When questioned who she is, she will answer: "I am Kanaka Durgamma, and it is because you have neglected my worship that this sickness has come. I am the one who is killing your cattle". The people now ask what her demands are, and again she replies: "I am Kanaka Durgamma. You have forgotten me. You have not given me offerings of blood. You have not sent me from your village with honour. So you must build me a temple and offer to me the blood of chickens, sheep, goats, and buffaloes. Do me the right honours and I will leave you."[248]

This aspect of the dangerous divine with which the people meddle as little as possible, is of vital importance for the concept of the *nityasumaṅgalī*. It is a matter of discussion, indeed, in how far do the 'higher' forms of Hinduism share this aspect of danger and fear as well as the ritual 'ambiance' with the village cults. Our western scholarly outlook has been significantly influenced by romantic and idealistic or philosophical notions that were either read into Hinduism or selected from its large bulk of literature. No doubt, Indian philosophical and speculative thinking as well as artistic accomplishments have risen to immense heights, but to relate these to ritual worship is, in many cases, most probably an error. Concepts like the human *ātman* longing for the universal Brahman, meditation and purification, and often even *bhakti*, are not always identical with the temple-ritual. Such lofty attitudes can be found only in highly sophisticated centres. The Hindus themselves often express the opinion that idol worship belongs to those of weak intellect,[249] whereas the aim of securing material welfare (*bhukti*) is rated even lower, not to speak of the propitiatory rites performed for the dangerous, fierce village deities. Everyone, however, acknowledges their power and considers it safer to bring them the sacrifices which they want. Therefore we find parts of this type of worship in every facet of Hinduism, from the villager to the most erudite Brahmin. Because of the ubiquitous presence of these rites of propitiation and its relation to the *nityasumaṅgalī* we will outline the structure of these village rituals and discuss its component parts.

The *structure* of the worship offered to village goddesses can, generally, be described thus:

1. a disaster occurs (either epidemic diseases, draught or death among the cattle);

2. this is considered to be a sign of anger, i.e. a 'heated state' of the goddess;

3. a convocation of the villagers is effected; they are inspired to participate in the worship by the recitation of stories that relate the terribly dangerous nature of the deity;

4. the goddess is bathed, i.e. 'cooled off';

5. she is given 'heated' food according to her ferocious, 'heated taste' that features an abundance of blood;

6. a procession is arranged through the village;

7. a final 'heated' sacrifice is offered: a most precious animal, the buffalo. The head is severed and its front paw is cut off and placed in the animal's mouth; this indicates total submission. A lamp is placed on the buffalo's head, the fat from the abdomen serving as oil for the flame which should appease the goddess and induce her to leave the village. In some cases the image of the deity that has been worshipped is taken to the boundary of the village and disposed of with the words: "Amma, now we have done everything for you. Please go away and do not enter our village again". Whereas in other cases the worshippers will carry the image to the boundary, turn its face away from the village and slip away in the dark.[250]

The structure outlined above has only a very general validity. The modes of worship differ almost from case to case depending on the fierceness of the deity.[251] The goddesses of the *śakti* type are considered to be more dangerous than those belonging to the seven sisters (*kaṉṉimār* 'virgins'). It is probable that these *śaktis* have no original connection with the Hindu *Śaktis* who express the energy of the gods as manifested in their wives; but they are female deities, too, therefore this was the easiest classification. While any village goddess is commonly called *śakti*, the term is usually applied to the fiercer ones, and especially to those which have not been incarnated, and have no fixed temple or image. For such goddesses a temporary image is made by the potter. Often its worship is held in the night while the villagers hide inside the house. Women are afraid of the envious eye of the goddess that may fall on them, and never participate in these rites. The procession of the goddess takes a gruesome aspect: to prevent her looking at the village and its houses with a discontented, envious eye she is propitiated once more at midnight after the sacrificial buffalo was killed. An outcaste man is brought to the scene of the sacrifice. He smears his body with blood from the beheaded buffalo, winds the intestines around his neck, and takes the liver in his mouth. A pot containing food soaked in blood is placed in his hands, and accompanied by men armed with sticks and old swords, he starts to go to the boundaries of the village. As this weird procession moves along they shout *Bali!, Bali!* 'The sacrifice, the sacrifice!', and flourish their swords and sticks,

to keep off the evil spirits. The man carrying the bloody offering is held up by ropes, and even then often falls to the ground, saying that he sees the spirits. When he thus falls, limes are cut in two and thrown into the air, and lambs are sacrificed on the spot. The man then recovers from his pretended swoon, and the procession goes forward. Sometimes the procession continues around the village while bloody rice is scattered to keep out the *śaktis*.[252]

The worship of the *pēys* ('devils, demons, ghosts') is considered even more dangerous. Elmore describes the manifestation of the *pēys* in the form of possession. A specialist, called *bhūta vaidyaḍu* (demon doctor), is called for. He examines the patient and decides that the illness is due to possession by a demon or spirit of a deceased person. A diviner is then invited to come. Apparently this is always a woman; after various ceremonies and formulas (*mantras*) she will be able to say which ghost is troubling the patient. The demon doctor proceeds in his task to exorcise the *pēy*. In this rather lengthy ritual an important part is again played by bloody sacrifices, rice, lamps and sacred diagrams on the floor called *muggu*. Finally the ghost will be driven out and the patient will receive a charm from the demon doctor to prevent the ghost to repeat his visit.[253] In Tamilnadu, too, the *pēys* are feared. as *pollāta tēvatai* (bad gods) but they seem to receive a more elaborate worship for which special deposits (*pītam*) and temples (*pēy kōvil*) are erected. The *pēys* are generally regarded as the spirits of those deceased family members who have not yet fully transgressed the process of death and who return among the living to assert their frustrated wishes of their own life-time. Their victims become aware of their demands by persistent headaches, fever or worse afflictions. These are a result of the aggressive attacks of the *pēys*. Finally, the possessed or his family will enter into a bond called *aṭimai* (slavery) with the *pēy* to restore the harmony of human life. In this way several families have to maintain these relationships of interdependence with the *pēys*. The sacrifices offered to the *pēys* resemble closely those performed for the goddess, featuring loud music and possessed dancing.[254] In Kerala these dances have become the central parts of the worship offered to the *pēys*; they remind us of the description of the *tuṇaṅkai* performed by dancers clad as beautiful *pūtams* and *pēys* (*Perumpāṇāṟṟuppaṭai* 234-5). These dances are known in Kerala as *teyyam* and in South Kanara as *bhūta*.[255] Performances can be classified into ten divisions on the basis of their theme: 1. Worship connected with hunting; 2. snake worship; 3. ghosts of victims and violent accidents; 4. ancestor worship; 5. hero worship; 6. praise of gods and godesses associated with specific places; 7. praise of gods and goddesses in local legends ((*sthalapurāṇas*) 8. praise of gods and goddesses according to 'great *purāṇas*'; 9. praise of gods with Puranic names but acting in non-Puranic stories; 10. Muslim characters. This instance illustrates well the flexibility of the concept of the divine as an afflicting, dangerous and oppressive force (*aṇaṅku*), and the mode of its control through sacrifice and dramatic performance from the *Caṅkam* times till the 20th century.

The *officiants* are, in short: 1. a *pūjārī*, the priest whose caste is not always

clear; 2. a story-teller, according to Elmore's data, of the Asadi caste. He fulfills the role of the 'bard of the goddess' relating her ferocious and heroic deeds. The Asadis of Bellary district form a separate caste or section of the outcastes. They eat food given to them by Madigas and take their girls in marriage. The Asadi girls, however, never marry and are dedicated to the goddess as *basavis* (generally understood as a type of devadasi).[256] In Tamilnadu such worship for the goddess, as outlined above, is termed *koṭai* ('present, liberal gift') and we see the members of the *villuppāṭṭu* ensemble take the place of the story teller.[257] Here, too, we may draw attention to a parallel with the war-bards of the *Caṅkam* age who accompanied the king and his warriors to the battle-field in order to inspire and encourage them declaiming the heroic deeds of the ancestors and even impersonating brave warriors of the past. 3. The general activities that constitute the worship are practically drowned in the loud performances of several bands of music, dance and other dramatic activities. These bands are generally referred to as *mēḷam* and comprise at least two *nāgasvara* players (a type of *oboe*) and two drummers (playing the *pampai* drum or *tavil*).[258] There are specialised bands for specific occasions of which we will discuss two examples. The festivities for the *pēys* are accompanied by the *naiyāṇṭimēḷam*, the band of mockery. The procession of the milkpot (*pāl kuṭam*) which forms part of the *koṭai* for the goddess is accompanied by the *kumpamēḷam*, the band of the pot (< Skt. *kumbha*). The *kumpamēḷam* is formed by two gypsy women (Kuṟatti) who dance while carrying a pot (*kumpam* or *karakam*) on their head. They are accompanied by a male dancer of their clan (Kuṟavaṉ) who dances sometimes with a *kāvaṭi* (pole from which sacrificial offerings may be suspended). Such a *kāvaṭi* bearer usually fulfils the role of *kōmāḷi* ('buffoon'). The Kuṟattis and the Kuṟavaṉ go along the route of the procession accompanied by a *mēḷam* during the afternoon of the *koṭai*; they halt at many places to sing and dance songs that are greatly appreciated because of their humorous and obscene nature.[259] Traditionally, it is believed that those objects which attract the first attention will 'absorb' all the intended evil of a look. Therefore obscene images are found in the field[260], pots treated with whitewash on house-tops, and often one will find the inscription *eṉṉai pārkka ciri* ('looking at me, laugh!') which seems to be an effective method of rendering evil eye (*dṛṣṭi*) impotent. Structurally speaking, the *kumpamēḷam* functions in the ritual slot of the band of the devadasis. In Agamic ritual processions we encounter a twofold *mēḷam* that accompanies the travelling god. This two-fold *mēḷam* comprises a *periyamēḷam* ('big band' with the *nāgasvara* players) and a *ciṉṉamēḷam* ('small band' which is composed of the female dancer, her dance-master and musical accompanyists). To these two *mēḷams* we will return later.[261] It is, however, important at this point to suggest the analogy of the ritual officiants like the *nāgasvara* players, the drummers, and the singing and dancing dramatic performers, with the *kōṭiyar* (player of wind instruments), *muḻavu* drummer, the *perumpāṇar* (players of the large lute) and *ciṟupāṇar* (players of the small lute, among whom the *viṟali* and *pāṭiṇi*). 4. An important part

is also played by the washerman, the potter who provides the temporary images, and a number of other outcastes who should dispose of the carcasses of the slaughtered animals.

The *implements* of worship should be noted, too. First of all there is the constant use of pots either as a *synonym of the goddess* or as a ritual object that is associated with the goddess. A number of insignia of the divine status of the goddess are used throughout the rituals, sometimes gaining an independent status as synonym of the goddess; these insignia are: the royal staff, the *koṭi* or *jarjara* (a kind of banner pole which must be found for the execution of a festival[262], the trident (drawn as well on the outside walls of houses), the snake, the snake-hood, a basket, and an ant-hill. These implements do not quite lose their meaning when used outside the context of the ritual, neither do the various substances that should be applied and offered to the goddess. These substances can be divided, roughly speaking, in the categories of 'heating' and 'cooling'; both should be offered in order to satisfy and at the same time to appease the terrible temper of the deity. Satisfaction can be derived only from substances that befit her temper. Therefore she is given plenty of meat and blood to feast on; on the other hand she is 'cooled off' by immersion in water, by application of saffron, of rice paste (*māvu*)[263], of flowers, fruits, leaves, and by the offering of rice and especially of burning lamps. The cooling effect of the waving of lamps (*dīpa*) and of liquids coloured with turmeric and charcoal (*āḷam*) can be found on all levels of South Indian Hinduism. In some of the fiercer types of worship that deal with devils (*pēys*), cowrieshells, wooden and terracotta figurines are used. In several rituals elaborate patterns are drawn on the floor, either out of white rice powder or filled up with many colours; these are called differently in Tamilnadu (*kōḷam*), Telugu speaking areas (*muggu*) and in Kerala (*tantra, mantra* or *maṇḍala*).[264] A last type of implement in effecting the desired result can be human mediators, like the demon doctor (*bhūta vaidyaḍu*), the female diviner, other possessed persons, demon dancers who become one with the spirits whom they impersonate during the ritual performance, and those ritual specialists who are considered to be an incarnation of the goddess as long as they live. One such ritual person is the female officiant called *mātaṅki*. Because of the vital importance of this phenomenon for the tradition of *nityasumaṅgalīs* we will quote here in full the method of selection, transformation and ritual function of the *mātaṅki* (Elmore, 1925, p. 22ff.).

'Mathamma (one of the seven virgins) is the special goddess of the Madigas. While all castes have fear of her, and contribute to her worship, caste distinctions prevent any but Madigas from taking an active part in the ceremonies. But Mathamma has another form which is far more important, and this is as a Matangi. A Matangi is a Madiga woman who is supposed to be possessed with the spirit of Mathamma. The selection of a new Matangi is an important ceremony. The Matangi holds her position for life, and her successor is usually not chosen until after her death. One method of making the choice is to bring all unmarried girls of the village before the shrine of

Mathamma. Songs are then sung, drums are beaten loudly, and the goddess is invoked to descend upon the chosen one. Soon one of the girls will act as if possessed with the spirit, and it is understood that the choice has fallen on her. There are other ordeals for the new Matangi to pass. The test appears to be that she shall be able to control herself when possession comes upon her. She is seated on the sacred *muggu* beside a pot of buttermilk, and four other pots of buttermilk are placed around her. Strings are tied from the pots to the roof so close to the girl that if she moves she will spill the buttermilk. Then the possession is invoked. If she passes this test successfully she is invested with the insignia of her position, a basket or sieve, a snake-headed bamboo stick, a bunch of margosa leaves, and a rope with cowrie shells attached. A different test is found in the village of Chendulur: there it is the custom to dig out an ant-hill and seat the girl in the excavation with a basket turned bottom side up over her. The *bavaneedu*[265] then begins the story-telling, relating the deeds of former Matangis. When the possession comes upon the girl she leaps from the ant-hill tossing the basket aside, and is then acclaimed the chosen Matangi.

The centre of the Matangi worship is in a village called Malinthapadu, near Cumbum in the Kurnool District. Here every Matangi must come for final initiation. The expenses are very heavy, and must be borne by the Matangi or those sending her. There will be much profit to her later by the gifts she receives in the exercise of her office, so the expenses are gladly met. The initiation is performed by Brahmans, and appears to be simple. The candidates are placed in a row before the goddess Ellamma, who is supposed to be the original form of Mathamma. Their faces are marked with sacred symbols similar to those on the face of the goddess, after which a buffalo is killed as an offering to Ellamma. These ceremonies continue for five days, when the spirit of Ellamma is said to have fully come upon the Matangis. The candidates are then sent away. One other ceremony is performed usually in the native village of the Matangi. This is some form of a marriage. Usually she is married to a tree, and it is only a matter of form.

The Matangi is Mathamma or Ellamma incarnate, and yet it does not appear that she is worshipped. She takes, however, a most important part in the cult of the village gods. If there is no local Matangi, often one is brought from a distance. She marches behind the master of ceremonies in the procession, and when her time comes she becomes possessed by the spirit of Mathamma. She then runs about among the people, touching them with her stick, spurting toddy from her mouth all over them, and backing up against them, all the time uttering strange wild cries. Not only the Madigas, but the higher castes, even Brahmans, stand in line, as anxious to be spat upon and touched by her stick and her person as are the lowest. There is a current story of a rajah who was omitted by the Matangi, she thinking that he was too great for her humiliating ceremonies, but he insisted upon sharing the blessing. At some parts of the ceremony she speaks things that are well

understood. As she rushes about spitting on those who under ordinary circumstances would almost choose death rather than to suffer such pollution[266] from a Madiga, she breaks into wild, exulting songs, telling of the humiliation to which she is subjecting the proud caste people. She also abuses them all thoroughly, and as in the worship of Bangaramma, they appear to expect it and not to be satisfied without a full measure of her invective.[267] After this ceremony she visits the homes of the Brahmans, and the visit does not appear to be a pleasant one for them. She comes into the courtyard and smears a pot with cow-dung, on which she places her basket. The inmates of the house at once fill the basket with food and cover the top with a layer of powdered rice. Then a small lamp is placed on top of this and lighted. This appears to be the nearest approach to worship the Matangi receives. She then holds out a pot and asks for toddy. Water is usually brought instead and filling her mouth with this she again goes through the process of spattering them all. The women give her their bodices, and the head woman gives her the cloth which she is wearing.[268] The men give her their sacred threads. She then leaves the place, still singing her wild songs telling of the humiliation to which she has reduced the Brahmans.'

This passage has been quoted in full since it strongly indicates the continuation of one ritual person from post-*Caṅkam* times till the 20th century. Throughout this long stretch of time we have evidence of her presence as well as of both the unchanging basic aspect of her office and the changing cultural context and sophistication in which she carried this office out. According to the Tamil Lexicon *mātaṅki* means Kālī, Pārvatī, goddess of the *yāḻ* (lute) and danceuse singing about Katirvēl (i.e. Murukaṉ). *Mātaṅki* means, again, Umā, consort of Śiva, Kālī, songstress (*pāṇmakaḷ*) and singing danceuse. *Mataṅkaṉ* is a class of *pāṇars* (*perumpāṇaṉ*), while *mātaṅkiyār* is used for a characteristic theme in *Kalampakam* (literary genre from 9th century onwards) describing the love of a man towards a beautiful young actress who plays with swords in both hands. The earliest reference to *mātaṅki* can be found in the *Cilappatikāram* (ca. 450 A.D.) V. 184 (*Intiraviḻā*) according to Aṭiyārkkunallār (12th century A.D.) who interprets the term *kaṇṇuḷāḷar* as *mātaṅkar*. Kailasapathy explains these bards as actors, dancers, masqueraders who performed *cāntikkūttu*–a type of primitive ritual dance executed in the centre of a village settlement.[269] Early medieval and late medieval data can be found in *Piṅkalanikaṇṭu* (ca. 700-900 A.D.) st. 92 which gives the names of *pāṇmakaḷ* as follows: *pāṭiṇi, viṟali, pāṭṭi, mātaṅki, pāṭaṉmakaṭūu. Nantikkalampakam* (9th century) speaks of *mātaṅki* who sings the praises of king Nantivarman and dances well. That the name *mātaṅki* or *mātaṅkaṉ* must have been closely connected with the knowledge of music and dance is perhaps indicated as well by the fact that the only treatise on music of the early Middle Ages, the *Bṛhaddeśi* (8th century) is ascribed to Mataṅka muṉivar.[270] In later sources the *mātaṅki* is often referred to as singing and dancing with two swords, sometimes even a drum.[271] The late *Tiruvaraṅkakkalampakam* (17th century) states that the hearts of the onlookers

melt like wax in the fire (of love) when they see the *mātaṅki* seeking the feet of Araṅkar (Śrī Raṅganātha). The Sanskrit dictionary (Monier-Williams) explains *mātaṃgī* as name of the mythical mother of the elephant tribe; a Caṇḍāla or Kirāta woman; name of a form of Durgā, and further as one of the ten *mahāvidyās* and as the mother of Vasiṣṭha. *Mātaṃga* means elephant; *Ficus Religiosa*; Caṇḍāla (man of lowest rank) or Kirāta (mountaineer, barbarian), and the name of a serpent demon.

In short, it seems that the *mātaṅki* can be considered a phenomenon of indigenous origin. In the oldest Tamil literary references she appears to be a female bard belonging to the group of *pāṇmakaḷ*, later on she is referred to as singing, dancing and swaying two swords as well as singing in one of the most refined centres of Hinduism, Srirangam. In the twentieth century she is to be found only in villages as the incarnation of Ellamma. Up to this day girls are dedicated to this goddess.[272] Their identification with the goddess (or with the divine) seems to have been the unchanging basic aspect of their tradition which outlived all artistic 'polish' that affluent centres of Hindu culture added to it. To this possibility we will return later.

The second category of goddesses are the benign, friendly female deities who impart fertility and harmony. Elmore refers to them as *perantulu*. A *perantulu* is a woman whose husband is still living, who is faithful and has borne children. If she dies before her husband she may become the object of worship. Such women are said to be 'lucky' or auspicious and also called *sumaṅgalīs*. They are the ideal models for women, both married and unmarried. The latter turn to these goddesses for obtaining a suitable husband, while the first worship them primarily to secure offspring. For that purpose a marriage ceremony is performed between the goddess and her husband.[273] This image is very important as it contrasts the benign, peaceful 'married' goddess with the ambivalent, unbalanced 'single' goddesses that were discussed above. The strength of this type of goddess is sought not so much outside in the form of ritual worship of these deities but it is rather followed up by individual identification with the great goddess, especially Lakṣmī. Every woman is potentially such a benign goddess if she follows the right code of conduct and feeling. If she does so she can obtain justice, wealth, children, health and even conquer death according to traditional beliefs. These beliefs can be found in the indigenous epics, like *Cilappatikāram* or the oral folk epic *Aṇṇaṉmār Katai* ('The Story of the Elder Brothers'). *Aṇṇaṉmār Katai* (also translated as 'The Three Twins') is really about triplets: two brothers and a sister. Though this account focusses mainly on the heroic exploits of the two males, the additional female is important to the understanding of key events. This hidden woman gives her twin brothers their magical power in battle and advises them on all issues.[274] While the sister (*Tāṅkāḷ* 'sister') is identified with Pārvatī, the mother (*Tāmarai* meaning 'lotus') is seen as Lakṣmī. B.E.F. Beck gives the following praise song found in the folk epic:

Powerful Lakṣmī, sweet one
Fulfilling her title, she reigns, she reigns, she reigns there
Silver-fingered authority, sweet one
As a solitary dignity she reigns, sweet ruler
It rains three times a month, it rains there
Once a year it pours, there it pours.

This song not only links Tāmarai with Lakṣmī but also attributes to her a similar range of magical powers. Each has the ability to induce great prosperity and well-being, and both women are extremely beautiful. Tāṅkāḷ, the sister, is identified with either Pārvatī or with the youngest of the Kaṉṉimār who are all linked in a general way to the goddess Pārvatī. She is described as a chaste girl, rocking on a swing, but later, near the end of the epic it becomes still clearer that Tāṅkāḷ is really a goddess. She takes on a destructive, angry aspect after her brothers die.[275] When she finds her brothers' bodies, the divine power of her lament brings them back to life. The success of this proceeding depends ultimately on her skill as a singer; and by implication, her magical abilities rest on her chastity, which imbues her with special power and allows her to bring dead relatives back to life.[276]

Conclusion

The popular concepts about the divine as found in village cults and beliefs centre mostly around the goddess. The female principle is credited with a highly eruptive, dynamic power that is hard to control. This force can be applied for the welfare, fertility, health and justice of human society, but also it may break loose and result in epidemic diseases and other calamities. Both expressions of this force are connected with a type of goddess, or with a particular aspect of an ambivalent goddess. Ambivalent goddesses are said to be the Kaṉṉimār who may work either for the welfare of man or for his destruction; generally, the *śaktis* are considered to be undoubtedly dangerous, whereas Lakṣmī is always regarded as benign. All these divine manifestations are related to human females: ideally speaking all married women should be manifestations of the goddess Lakṣmī, they should bring prosperity, fertility and peace to their homes, protect their husband and brothers by their correct behaviour and by the performance of rituals and observances called *nōṉpu-s* which they fulfil without male participation.[277] If these women are not successful, or remain unmarried their powers can become unbalanced, and especially after their death they may return and avenge their misfortunes or envy. It is against these unbridled attacks that human society must protect itself. It does so by various means: propitiation through worship and sacrifices, possession, and through contact with the goddess in her form of a human incarnation, like the *mātaṅki*. This ritual person is immune to all dangers that are posed by the goddesses' temper, since she herself is part of the goddess. Because of that identity she is able to give an 'outlet' to the anger and scorn of the goddess, and to receive her

worship. In this manner the society is saved from sudden, unexpected and accumulated irritation of the goddess. This basic function of averting the anger of the goddess, evil eye and other dangerous effects from spirits that hover around can be seen as the central task of the *nityasumaṅgalī*. Whereas the village cults offer this concept in the most direct and unsophisticated form, it is a concept that was never lost, neither in Agamic temple ritual nor at the court of the king.

B. 2. Focus of Agamic temple traditions

Culturally seen, the Agamic temple worship occupies a central position in the *continuum* of Hinduisation: all layers of South Indian culture can be recognised in the large body of temple traditions. This multivalence holds in particular for the phenomenon of the devadasi and is exemplified by her repertoire. As we will discuss the role of the devadasi-*nityasumaṅgalī* within the structure of the Agamic temple ritual in Chapter two in great detail, we will consider here the broad cultural base of the repertoire of the devadasis, as it has come down to us today.

While it is most probable that the devadasi-*nityasumaṅgalī* developed originally from the *nityasumaṅgalī* types found in the village cults, she acquired a more prestigious status within the ritual of Agamic temples; here ritual, devotion (*bhakti*) and artistic sophistication were combined in the official tasks of one person. Several of these tasks do remind us of the village cults on the one hand, whereas other accomplishments seem to be derived from court culture.

Similarities to village cults

The goddesses of the village cults are often called *ammāvāru*; this is a respectful title for woman, and indicates as well smallpox. The names *peddammā* and *ciṉṉammā* do not only mean 'great lady' and 'small lady' but also 'smallpox' and 'chickenpox'. In any case, the underlying meaning of *ammā* is the same: a female deity who may possibly bring disease.[278] In the repertoire of devadasis we find two types of songs that can be connected with the propitiation of the *ammās*: the *ammāvāri kīrttaṉai* and the *ammavāri praharīlu*.[279] We do not argue that the devadasis sang these songs as part of a village festival but we would like to point out the cultural indebtedness of this part of temple ritual to the beliefs that are expressed as the central point of village cults. An example that is even more striking is the task of *kumbhārati* 'waving the pot-lamp' in order to remove the influences of evil eye (*dṛṣṭidoṣa*). This ritual was to be performed in daily as well as in festival worship and was considered of vital importance. In fact, it was the most distinctive task of the devadasi tradition. The ritual of *kumbhārati* was quoted by all informants as obligatory. One of the informants, Smt. P. Raṅganāyakī, quoted two tasks as obligatory: *kumbhārati*, and *Kāmaṉ kūttu* 'drama on Kāma (the god of love)'. The rights which the devadasis had within the temple establishment were based on the execution of this ritual of waving

the pot lamp, either with or without accompaniment of a small song-*cum*-dance composition called *puṣpāñjali*.[280] The medieval commentator on the *Kāmikāgama*, Sadyojātaśivācārya[281], states that at the end of the offering of various lamps (*dīpārādhanā*) that is performed daily for the images of the gods, all lamps should be extinguished in the *pūrṇakumbha* (full pot). This *pūrṇakumbha* is the most important of all lamps. A parallel with the customs of village rituals is striking; here, too, the pot functions both as a lamp and as a synonym for the goddess, whereas the burning lamp concludes the worship of the goddess in the hope that she will be pacified and remove herself.

A third example of an important ritual that is shared by both the village and the temple, is the custom of propitiating evil spirits and forces that reside in the ritual territory or that are thought to roam about there. This must be done before the start of a festival (*utsava*)[282], on a smaller scale during each day of the festival, and almost symbolically as part of daily worship (*nityotsava*).[283] This ritual called *balidāna* (gift of *bali*-sacrifice onto the *balipīṭha*) did comprise the offering of rice with kumkum and a fluid milk product, accompanied by the suitable *mantra* (ritual formula), beating of the drum and sometimes other instruments, and by the short dance—compositions relating to the god to be propitiated. These dance—pieces are known as *kautvam* and were danced by the devadasis in the 19th century. This custom died almost out during the first half of the 20th century; only fragments were preserved while some devadasis remembered the custom of 'showing some hands' during the *balidāna* ritual. Two sets of such *kautvams* have been preserved: the *navasandhi kautvam* (phrases for the nine cardinal points) and *pañcamūrti kautvam* (phrases for the five manifestations) which received their choreography from the dancemasters of the Tanjore court.[284] However, this genre of ritual dances must have been very widely spread as an integral part of the tasks of the devadasi-*nityasumaṅgalī*. They illustrate well the flexibility of the tradition that employed sophisticated choreographies in a ritual slot that seems to be identical with the *bali* sacrifices performed in the worship of village *śaktis*.[285]

Oral folk traditions

Among the songs and mimed dances of the devadasis we find a great number of folk songs that were employed to convey the message of devotion (*bhakti*). This possibility was elaborated in full first by Māṇikkavācakar (9th century) and followed up by many later composers of temple music. Among these songs we find *ōṭam* ('boat song'), *ūñjal* ('swing song'), *lāli* ('lullaby'), *eccarikai* ('caution'), *katavuttiṟakkum* ('opening the door') and other songs of emotional content. Sometimes a number of 'joke' songs were composed by the devadasis themselves for all types of festival and social functions. One such song *gobbi pāṭṭu* (a song accompanied the clapping of hands of a partner) seems to indicate the same pastime as Māṇikkavācakar's *Tiruttōṇōkkam* ('aiming at the shoulder').[286]

Indebtedness to court refinement and conclusions

The repertoire of the temple devadasis contains as well a number of sophisticated compositions that used to be danced during great festivals. Some informants maintain that these dances were not performed on the streets but in the pavillion (*maṇḍapa*) facing the central shrine, whereas others maintain that the concert dances (*catir kaccēri*) were shown at several points of the itinerary of the great temple-car (*ratha, tēr*). Among these compositions we find a number of *padas* ('songs for mimed dance'), *varṇams* (lit. 'colour', a dance composition that combines technical, i.e. abstract dance with mimed dance), *tillāṇās* (a highly technical abstract dance composition) and several *alārippūs* (short introductory, technical dance). Several of these compositions are still played by the *nāgasvarakāras;* unfortunately most of the textual content (*sāhitya*) has been lost or forgotten.

The repertoire of those devadasis who performed actively in temples till 1947 shows a great correspondence with the classically stylised festival program of songs by the composer Śrī Tyāgarāja[287] and the systematisation of the *sarva vādyam* (ritual offering of all instruments) by Ceyyūr Ceṅkalvarāyya Śāstrī (1810-1900). His systematisation shows the greatest flexibility in absorbing all known musical and dance compositions into the ritual offering. Among the seventy-two items that were to be performed we find medieval Tamil works like *Tēvāram* and *Tiruvicaippā*, the regular *mēḷam* for the temple (comprising *nāgasvara* for the *periyamēḷam* or 'grand, big band' and *mukhavīṇa* for the *ciṉṉamēḷam* 'little, small band'); other instruments like *pañcamukhavādyam* (five faced drum), *śaṅkha* (conch), *navuri* (trumpet) and even fiddle (violin) and 'gunset' most probably meaning 'concert'. The vocal compositions are manifold and mostly from oral, folk tradition; a few interesting dance pieces are noted down like *vīṇā nāṭyam* (dance performed to the accompaniment of the *vīṇā*), *bhūjaṅga svaram* and *bhūjaṅga nāṭyam* both to the sound of the *makuṭi* (snake charmer's instrument). After *sarva vādyam* a *kēḷikkai* or dance performance could be arranged. The entire *sarva vādyam* would last between three and four hours, whereas the *kēḷikkai* might continue into the night. This tradition of Cheyyur seems to be the most elaborate and ecclectic in character.[288] Other traditions like those of Tiruvarur, Pudukkottai and Tiruttani are more concise. All data agree, however, on the performance of (*kumbhārati* with) *puṣpāñjali, maṅgalam, eccarikai, lāli* and *ūñjal.*[289]

Another shared feature of the devadasi repertoire is the strong bias towards Telugu in the more refined and artistic compositions that are found in the concert repertoire and in several devotional songs. The linguistic preference for Telugu among all the devadasis interviewed in the Tamil speaking area is striking and points at the strong ties between the tradition of devadasis, their art and performances and the cultural level of the court which preferred Telugu since ca. 1350 A.D. Although the linguistic content of the songs and dances of the devadasis is for the greater part in Sanskrit and

Telugu, the ritual occasions can be considered as continuations of bardic and medieval genres as well as of cults rooted in village cultures. These ritual occasions for the performance of the devadasi repertoire were incorporated into the Agamic structure of Hindu temple ritual.

B.3. Focus of court/patron culture

The royal patron

> "In the Hindu context the divine is not a simple thing to define, nor is it radically separable from ordinary human existence. As with so much else in Indian culture, the divine exists as a palimpsest: it is there in ordinary life, it manifests itself in incarnations and less forceful presences such as *rishi*-s, sages, sadhus, devout individuals; and it is present in an essential, highly refined, substance as the Ramlila *murti*-s who are, what they are presumed to be at the same time." (Richard Schehner, *Ramlila of Ramnagar*, An Introduction, 1982).

This study of the Ramlila (*Rāmalīlā*)[290] is an ideal example of the cultural complexity on which such a processional theatre is based.[291] As such it is not greatly different from the religious drama of the temple processions (*utsava*). In both types of ritual performances the king had an important role to play. Thus, the Maharaja of the Ramlila is called Vibhuti Narain Singh in daily life; even after the abolition of the principalities in 1947, though, he is still the "Mahārāja" for the participants in the Ramlila. This title is not honorific or nostalgic, though it has elements of both. It is operational: it works in the world of today. Even as India has become a modern secular state, the ritual aspects of its culture, especially in the villages and in the village-like neighbourhoods of the cities remain resilient and alive. In the theatrical-religious-social event of the Ramlila the Mahārāja is able to maintain his identity as Mahārāja purely on the basis of ritual. In this context he still exists to some degree at least as 'a mystery', i.e. mystery in the medieval European sense: an event whose causes and effects are merged. He is the causer of Ramlila, and he is caused by the Ramlila.[292]

This situation of the Ramlila and the role of the Mahārāja therein is exceptional for the present day. Due to the very special position of Ramnagar in the vicinity of Kashi-Benares and the Ganges as well as due to massive sponsorship it has been possible to continue the tradition.[293] The former Mahārājas should be imagined in a similar identity. Their royalty should indeed be regarded as an almost uninterrupted *sacer ludus* in which they fulfilled a highly meaningful role. This principle was the fundament of the Hindu royal courts; individual differences were found mostly in the degree of splendour and sophistication of the court and its ruler.

We would like to quote another example of contemporary Hindu culture which shows the continuation of the role of the king and the necessary

participation of the devadasi-*nityasumaṅgalī* type of female servants. The royal support and participation are described thus[294]:

"In Seraikella, the family deity of the rulers is Raghunath or Rama. The *Chaitra Parva,* however, is dedicated to Shiva. Yet, Shiva has no place at all in the celebrations, that privilege being given to Shakti, who appears as Mangala Chandi and Kali. Again, ceremonies are conducted in temples of Shiva and none in temples of Shakti.[295]....Come April, the royal astrologers consult the ruler's horoscope and determine a day favourite to his stars. The festival begins on that day, its formal inauguration being marked by the hoisting of the *jarjara* or ritual flag.[296]....The festival proper, which lasts four or five days, begins with the *Jatra Ghat* ritual. However, before that, in the afternoon, takes place the *Mangala Ghat,* which is the only part of *Chaitra Parva* in which the participants are women. In this, three or four women from the Harijan community carry decorated pots filled with holy water on their heads, and to the strident pounding of kettle drums, dance their way from the river to a hallowed patch near the palace, known as Mangala Sthana. Here they dance with vigour and invariably fall into trance, after which much is made of them by the people. This is followed by the giving of fowl, as sacrificial offering, to the high priestess of the community who sits for the nonce in the *Mangala Sthana.* She decapitates each bird and returns the body to the offerer, to be carried home to provide a special feast.. ..In the *Jatra Ghat,* a *ghat* or small earthen pot, is carried in procession from the Majna *Ghat* to the palace and thence to the principal Shiva temple The. *Jatra Ghat* performer who is made up and dressed to represent Mangala Chandi, a manifestation of Shakti[297], along with the bearer of the *jarjara,* the musicians, the remaining *bhakta*-s and any number of followers, proceeds from the Majna *Ghat,* halting every few paces on the way to dance.... At some places devotees, mostly women, lie prostrate on the street, waiting for the *Jatra Ghat* to arrive and bless them with his touch."[298]

This festival ritual underlines the symbiotic unity of the ruler and the practically all-inclusive traditions of his people. Whereas the cultural level of this example can be said to have a close affinity to village and even tribal cults, this festival features as well the highly elaborate and symbolic dances of the Chhau tradition. After the *Jatra Ghat* performer has reached the courtyard of the palace and has danced there, the Chhau dancers take his place.

The court of the Tanjore period, however, seems to have belonged to a much more refined and splendorous cultural level. As we have seen on the previous pages, the Tanjore kings composed 'operatic ballets' for the temple festivals that were performed by devadasi singers and dancers. However, even here, the basic principle was followed, and we see that the tasks of the devadasis, who were employed as well in the king's court, functioned within its framework. These tasks were basically threefold:

1. Accompanying the king during his processions;[299]
2. performing *kumbhārati* for the king, daily and in an elaborate way on festival days;
3. rendering the atmosphere of the court auspicious by the performance of song and dance.[300]

These tasks could be fulfilled by courtesans, called *gaṇikā*, who were specially employed for this purpose. Sanskrit literature, in particular, yields abundant information about these royal courtesans, and would justify an independent study of the subject.[301] Our main interest must be limited to those temple devadasis who functioned as well at the royal court. We may presume that this custom arose only in the post-Vijayanagara period, due to the small size of the kingdoms and their weakened economic position. One of our devadasi informants, Smt. P. Raṅganāyakī, was married to the god Murukaṉ of Tiruttani temple (Tamilnadu) in 1934; on special festival occasions, however, she performed her ritual and artistic tasks in the palace of the king of Karvetinagar.[302] At the occasion of *Vijayadaśamī* all devadasis belonging to the temples which fell under the authority of this king, such as Tiruttani, Karvetinagar and Tiruvalankatu, were expected to go to the palace of the king. There a *durbar* was held in grand style; the king would be seated in a solemn fashion on his throne with all paraphernalia. Then *kumbhārati* would be offered by the devadasis to the king and a regular dance concert was held so that all devadasis could perform some dances and songs. For this they would be rewarded with a special *dakṣiṇā* (reward, ritual fee). At other occasions the devadasis would be requested to form an 'all woman' orchestra for the benefit of the royal ladies living in the palace. The participation by the king in temple rituals was limited to a single occasion: on the sixth evening of the great festival (*brahmotsava*) the god would be travelling on the tiger-mount (*puli vāhana*). The procession would stop in front of the palace; there the priest would start sprinkling turmeric water from a pot and then entrust the task further to the devadasis. This custom is characteristic for the spring-festival when men and women can freely throw turmeric water on each other.[303] This slightly erotic tenor of the festival is made more evident in the night of the same day when the god Murukaṉ appears on the elephant-mount (*yāṉai vāhana*) and the devadasis perform *Kāmaṉ kūttu* 'dance-play of Kāma (the god of love)'. The role of Kāmaṉ would be taken by one devadasi, dressed up as this god and carrying bow and arrow, while a number of other devadasis would retort him.[304]

By other informants we were told that the devadasis of Tirukkalukkunram were obliged to sing erotic *padas* on both Siva and on the king.[305] The tradition of royal support of the devadasis had dwindled greatly during the first half of the 20th century. Smt. P. Raṅganāyakī maintained that this was very different during the times of her grandmother, Smt. Subburatnammā. In those times, she said, there was both the money and interest.

Secular patrons

Apart from the patronage which the devadasis received from the temple and the king, their services were valued by society at large. Although the devadasis did not visit the houses of *pañcamas* (outcastes, the so-called 'fifth caste'), they officiated in the houses of Brahmins and of high-caste non-Brahmins (like Mutaliārs). Women of devadasi families took care of the

pūjā-room (home-altar or shrine) and performed *kumbhārati* or *ālatti/ālam* for the family-members. This function was called *māṇikkam*[306] Another instance of their bygone prestige was the code of politeness that prescribed that any dignified person of high social status should travel only with a retinue of devadasis. Important visitors should be received in the same manner.

The most important function of the devadasis in the houses of private patrons was to be present at their social-*cum*-ritual functions. These were mostly of the character of rites of passage (*saṃskāras*) like the hair-parting ceremony performed for pregnant females, the name-giving and ear-piercing ceremonies for children, and most importantly the wedding-ceremonies. A large bulk in the repertoire of the devadasis concerns songs for such occasions. The *maṅgalas* serve mostly the more simple rites of passage, whereas a rather rich variety of songs was sung during the wedding festivities. The major part of these songs are called *nalaṅku*, featuring the words *nalaṅkiṭa vārum* 'come to the anointment ceremony of the bride (before marriage)'; other songs accompany the custom of bride and bridegroom decorating each other with flowers in order to gain some physical intimacy (for example *Pūvac cēnta pāṭṭu*). Apart from these songs that have a ritual connection a great number of songs were sung for the amusement of the participants of the 'functions'. Smt. Raṅganāyakī told me that many of these songs were composed by her grandmother for the occasion. Among them are songs that mock the bridegroom like *Tañcāvūr tālukkā attāṉ* 'the brother-in-law from Tanjore taluk' and are sometimes very humorous. The translation (from Tamil) of the song runs thus: "You spoke about the artistic brother-in-law from Tanjore Taluk, but when one comes to see for oneself in Tanjore, he only beats a little drum, *lāli*. You spoke about the brother-in-law who is a policeman in Pondicherry, but once you reach there he is eating parched rice that he has picked up from the street, *lāli*. You mentioned the brother-in-law in Mayuram who is a manager, but looking for oneself one discovers that he grazes cattle, *lāli*." In this fashion the song continues ridiculing the prestige of the inhabitants of several other towns. The repertoire of Smt. P. Raṅganāyakī contains many 'joke-*pāṭṭu*'s' of this kind, like *Vaṅkāḷam pōyivarom* 'We have come from Bengal', *Tiruvallikēṇi Tippusāyapu* 'Tippu-sahib from Triplicane (now a part of Madras)'; sometimes the texts are slightly 'risqué' like in *Nellukuttara pāṭṭu* 'Ricepounding song' in which one of the two dramatis personae asks for 'a ripe woman' (*camiñca poṇṇu*). Again, in other cases we find an enumeration of all rail-road junctions of the East India Company sung in the form of an *ōṭam* (boat song, in *punnāgavarāḷi rāga*). The best example of the wit and vitality of the devadasis and their social role is perhaps found in the comic song *Kōḻipāṭṭu* which is written from the point of view of a chicken. The full translation is given below:

"They say that the chicken said:
—when people say: the basket has been placed upside down, I say: I have set the tent;

—when people say: all feathers have been spread, I say: I have purified all members;
—when people say: we have placed (the chicken) in the fire, I say: I have seen Agni Bhagavān (god of fire);
—when people say: we have cut (the chicken), thrusting it on the knife, I say: a disagreement has arisen between us and the knife;
—when people say: we have tied (the chicken), after rubbing it with *masāla*, I say: I have applied *mañcal*;
—when people say: we chew (the chicken), after having put it in the mouth, I say: I have seen the sixteen teeth;
—when people say: we swallow (the chicken) from the tongue down, I say: I have reached *Śivaloka*;
—when people say: we have eased ourselves, placing (it) on the rock, I say: I have seen Sūrya Bhagavān."[307]

Even nowadays the song evokes a roaring laughter both among the devadasi informants and among those who happened to hear of it.

The role of the devadasis in the life of secular patrons was mostly to lend prestige to any function or visit, to protect the family or gathering from evil influences, and to spread an auspicious atmosphere of mirth and art. Undoubtedly, the degree of artistic refinement rose to a high level in the houses of those patrons who had both the means and the knowledge to demand it.[308] In general, we should, probably, imagine the participation in the rites of passage rather as ritual than as artistic. The presence of the devadasis nevertheless was regarded as indispensable, respectable and most importantly so, as 'lucky'. In many cases it was the task of the devadasi to decorate the bride, prepare her wedding-necklace[309] and to accompany the wedding procession. This attitude, too, was lost in the 20th century, to be replaced by either classical, light-classical and film music.[310]

Conclusions

As far as our historical data go we can distinguish at all times and at all levels of culture and of society a 'ritual' person who deals effectively with the divine which is considered dangerously ambivalent. This female ritualist whom we would like to call *nityasumaṅgalī* renders her special power effective in three ways: 1. through her female sexuality that is identified with that of the goddess;

2. through a number of implements of ritual value like the pot, the lamp, coloured water, certain flowers, fruits and unguents;

3. through her art.

At different times and in different socio-cultural *foci* of South Indian culture a different emphasis has been laid on either of the three. In all cases, however, she deals with the ambivalent divine, warding off its evil forces and supporting its benign workings. This, in itself, is an extremely dangerous task, and only specially qualified persons can be up to it. Her special qualification is her auspiciousness which earns her the epithet *nityasumaṅgalī*.

Notes

1. Kapila Vatsyayan, *Traditional Indian Theatre: Multiple Streams*, New Delhi, 1980, p. 9.

2. It has been generally accepted that the bronze statuette of Mohenjo Daro represents a dancing girl. However, we agree with A.L. Basham (*The Wonder that was India*, London, 1967, p. 21) that it is by no means sure that the naked girl wearing only a large row of bangles is a dancer, or even a temple-dancer of Dravidian origin. If this were so, we would expect the girl to be modelled in the most characteristic dance-pose of the *first-position-granddemi-pilé* (cf. Classical Ballet).

3. References to dancers in Vedic literature are, however, too vague to identify the devadasi with any of them, although the possibility is by no means excluded.

4. Cf. Roland Barthes, *Elements of Semiology*, New York, 1968, p. 12, ftn. 1, and, p. 35-37, where a concept is described not as a thing nor as merely the consciousness of a concept. 'A concept is an instrument and a history, that is, a bundle of possibilities and obstacles involved in the world as experienced.' This dynamic character of a concept is hinted at, too, by Mukařovský in his definitions of aesthetic function, aesthetic value and of structure; cf. D.W. Fokkema and E. Kunne-Ibsch, *op. cit.*, p. 32-35, esp. p. 33: "Aesthetic value is not a static concept, but a process that evolves against the background of the actual artistic tradition and in relation to the ever-changing cultural and social context." It is the awareness of this dynamism which has prompted us to choose the subtitle "*towards* the *semiosis*" instead of "semiotic *analysis*": at this stage our task has been to grasp the dynamism of the concept that underlies the phenomenon of the devadasi; a further and more detailed analysis may be given later.

5. K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, *A History of South India*, Oxford University Press, 1955, cf. p. 65.

6. Nilakanta Sastri, 1955, cf. p. 82.

7. Nilakanta Sastri, 1955, cf. p. 85.

8. Nilakanta Sastri, 1955, cf. p. 26-27: Kanchi is mentioned as 'Houang-tche' in a record of a Chinese embassy to that town.

9. Nilakanta Sastri, 1955, cf. p. 26.

10. All datings of Tamil literature are taken from K.V. Zvelebil, *Tamil Literature*, Leiden, 1975, and from K.V. Zvelebil, *Tamil Literature Wiesbaden*, 1974. The *Eṭṭuttokai* comprises: 1. *Naṟṟiṇai* (100 A.D.-250 A.D.), 2. *Kuṟuntokai* (100 A.D.-250 A.D.), 3. *Aiṅkuṟunūṟu* (180 A.D.-250 A.D.), 4. *Patiṟṟuppattu* (150 A.D.-200 A.D.), 5. *Paripāṭal* (350 A.D.-600 A.D.), 6. *Kalittokai* (300 A.D.-600 A.D.), 7. *Akanāṉūṟu* (150 A.D.-300 A.D.), 8. *Puṟanāṉūṟu* (100 B.C.-300 A.D.). The *Pattupāṭṭu* consists of: 1. *Tirumurukāṟṟupaṭai* (date not settled), 2. *Porunarāṟṟuppaṭai* (ca. 190 A.D.), 3. *Ciṟupāṇāṟṟuppaṭai* (250 A.D.-275 A.D.), 4. *Perumpāṇāṟṟuppaṭai* (190 A.D.-200 A.D.), 5. *Mullaippāṭṭu* (ca. 230 A.D.), 6. *Maturaikkāñci* (ca. 215 A.D.), 7. *Neṭunalvāṭai* (ca. 215 A.D.), 8. *Kuṟiñcippāṭṭu* (ca. 180 A.D.), 9. *Paṭṭiṇappālai* (ca. 190 A.D.-200 A.D.), 10. *Malaipaṭukaṭām* (ca. 210 A.D.).

11. K.V. Zvelebil, *The Smile of Murugan*, Leiden, 1973, cf. p. 45-64.

12. K.V. Zvelebil, 1975, cf. p. 68-77.

13. The only detailed discussion of this period is available in Tamil by Mayilai Cīṇi. Vēṅkaṭacāmi, *Kaḷappirar āṭciyil tamiḻakam* (Tamilnadu under Kalabhra Rule), Madras, 1976.

14. Nilakanta Sastri, 1955, cf. p. 139.

15. K.V. Zvelebil, 1973, cf. p. 95.

16. K.V. Zvelebil, 1973, cf. p. 85-110 and A.K. Ramanujan, *The Interior Landscape*, London, 1970.

17. K.V. Zvelebil, 'The Nature of Sacred Power', *Acta Orientalia*, 40 (1979), p. 157.

18. *ibid.*, cf. p. 168-170.

19. *ibid.*, cf. p. 158ff.

20. K.V. Zvelebil, 1974, cf. p. 41.

21. K.V. Zvelebil, in *Acta Orientalia* 40 (1979), p. 168-169; also p. 192: the investigation of the term *aṇaṅku* in the meaning of 'sacred power' by K.V. Zvelebil was 'inspired by the critical reading of George L. Hart's important and controversial book *The Poems of Ancient Tamil*, University of California Press, 1975.' The concept of *aṇaṅku as* 'sacred power' was first discussed by George L. Hart in *JAOS*, 32, no. 2 (1973): 233-250 'Woman and the Sacred in Ancient Tamilnad'.

22. In modern Hinduism, too, the advent of puberty is considered a highly dangerous process and state of physis. The fact that the girl has become mature means that she shares now in the procreative power (*śakti*) of the great goddess (Sakti). This is marked by flow of menstrual blood. Blood, in itself, is seen as the immediate source of health and vitality. According to D.B. Mc Gilvray in his article 'Sexual Power and Fertility in Sri Lanka: Betticola Tamils and Moors' (in Carol P. MacCormack, *Ethnography of Fertility and Birth*, London Academic Press, 1982) it is the strength and quantity of the blood which accounts for the strength (*pelan*, *cakti*) of the body. The English word "force" (*pōs*) has crept into the local Tamil vocabulary, and is sometimes used in describing the condition of the blood. In this context, the term *pōs* evokes at once the vitality, the volume and the hydraulic pressure of the blood in the arterial system. The process of physiological maturation from infancy to adulthood is seen as a direct consequence of the increasing "force" of the blood in the body. One view concerning the menstrual flow of blood in women is that this is a necessity to maintain the balance between the strength of males and females. Women obviously accumulate so much blood, i.e. so much strength (*cakti*) that it needs to be drained away regularly; in the words of an Ayurvedic practitioner: "If it were not for her monthly period, five men could not hold one woman down". The transformation from female child into a pubertal girl is therefore marked by an elaborate ritual. Her new status is indicated by a new fashion of dressing, hair-do, the application of various substances, the intake of special food and doubled protection and control by the family. The last is necessary for two reasons: on the one hand the glances of other men than those of her family might incite her sexual desires and lead her to prostitution before marriage can be arranged, on the other hand the powerful blood of a virgin attracts demons who are bloodthirsty (cf. Kenneth David, Hidden Powers: 'Cultural and Socio-Economic Accounts of Jaffna Women' in: *The Powers of Tamil Women*, Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Syracuse University, 1980, *Foreign and Comparative Studies/South Asian Series* 8, p. 96). The reason why the blood of a virgin (*kaṉṉi*) and her general state are far more dangerous than that of a married woman whose husband is alive (*sumaṅgalī*) is that the force of her blood is not harmonised with the physis of a male. The sexual capacity is thought of as 'heating' and so are all expressions of it: menstrual blood, (pubic) hair, developed breasts. The method of 'cooling down' this female force (*śakti*) is to bring it into a symbiosis with the male principle which is considered 'cooling'. Although sexual intercourse is thought of as 'heated' it results in a state of 'drained heat' and is thus cooling. If such a symbiosis is not yet achieved (like in the case of pre-marital girls) the application of 'cooling substances' like the products of the margosa tree, turmeric (*mañcal*), the intake of 'cooling foods' like rice and rice flour dishes, but not such foods that are considered eruptive (*kirānti*) like pine-apple fruit, chillies, salt and sugar. A parallel of the cooling diet is found in the food offered to gods. An important part is also played by the ritual bath and *ālatti*, i.e. removal of evil, eruptive influences by means of a lit lamp that is circled three times before the girl. Here, too, we find a parallel with the worship of the gods. However, man may fail in controlling these dangerous powers, and signs like pimples may indicate the lack of balance of male and female sexuality and thus resemble the angry state of the goddess. Again, a divine model is followed, namely that of those ascetic goddesses whose humour is extremely wrathful, who are living at the borders of human habitation and who generally are worshipped only to pacify their anger and to request her to leave the settlement.

It seems that there is a direct connection between the term *aṇaṅku*, found in classical Tamil literature and the symbiotic pair 'heating-cooling'; the balanced, harmonious state of this forceful power is related to the concept of auspicious (balanced) versus inauspicious (unbalanced, eruptive, dangerous). The *nityasumaṅgalī* played an important role in preventing the eruption of crises and in restoring balance.

23. K.V. Zvelebil, 'The Nature of Sacred Power', *Acta Orientalia* 40 (1979), p. 185.

24. Cf. also Brenda E.F. Beck, 'The Study of a Tamil Epic: Several versions of Silappadikaram Compared', *Journal of Tamil Studies* 1: p. 23-28. Another, contemporaneous, example of the power of a woman's chastity is found in the Malayalam novel 'Chemmeen' by Takazhi S. Pillai (transl. by Narayana Menon, Bombay, 1975) which describes the story of Karuthamma who continued her childhood friendship with a boy, called Pareekutti. As the two are playing on the beach they laugh at each others' jokes; suddenly, she feels as if Pareekutti fixes his glance on her breasts and flees away. This incident, however innocent, caused rumours about her character, chastity and ability to control her sexuality. As a result of that she is finally married to an elderly, problematic fisher-man called Palani. The gossip continues and her husband becomes suspicious. Although Karuthammatries to prove her proper behaviour, the 'stain' cannot be wiped off. One night, in a mood of reckless despair, she again meets Pareekutti while her husband is out on the sea. They finally do make love, and in the very same moment Palani is swallowed by the goddess of the sea (Katalamma).

25. C.S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love, A Study in Medieval Tradition*, Oxford University Press, 1936, p. 4.

26. I. Fišer, Indian Erotics, Praha, 1966, p. 15-16.

27. The unmarried, single state is considered highly dangerous and hard to control for human beings with average self-control. Even the divine pair of god and goddess is preferred to single, ascetic gods, whose temper is very sharp and energetic.

28. K. Kailasapathy, *Tamil Heroic Poetry*, Oxford, 1968, p. 195-6.

29. This theory concerning the *Caṅkam* milieu is suggested by K. Kailasapathy in his work *Tamil Heroic Poetry*. He compares his findings from the *Caṅkam* poetry with other bardic traditions like those of the Greeks, the Irish and the Celts and arrives thus at a coherent view of *Caṅkam* culture. The socio-historical framework in which he distinguishes several stages of political and cultural development have been criticised by other scholars for lack of supporting evidence (B.E.F. Beck and K.V. Zvelebil, in *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. XXIX, No. 1, November 1969, p. 184-186). The bardic character of the poems and their heroic audience were generally accepted (cf. E. Annamalai, 'A Fraternity with Diversity and Individuality', a review of K. Kailasapathy's *Tamil Heroic Poetry*, in *Mahfil*, A Quarterly of South Asian Literature, University of Chicago, Vol. Vi, 1970, No. : 2 and 3, p. 83ff.).

30. K. Kailasapathy, 1968, p. 241.

31. *Naṟ.* 95. 1—2 *āṭumakaḷ* indicates here rope-dancers.

32. K. Kailasapathy, 1968, p. 94-134 describes the various types of bards, their status and their bardic art. Cf. also S.C. Kersenboom-Story, 'Viṟali' in *Journal of Tamil Studies*, No. 19, June 1981, p. 19-41, in which an attempt is made to classify various bardic types according to the locus of their performance; for this purpose an investigation and statistic count of the following terms was performed: *aḵaval makaḷir, aṇaṅku, arivai, āṭukaḷam, āṭum, āṭumakaḷir, cāliṇi, celvi, cēripparattai, cevili-(yar), ceviyar, iḻaiyar, iravalar, iṟparattai, kalappai (yir/yar), kāmakkiḻatti, kantu, kātali, kātaṟkiḻamai, kiḻatti, kiṇaimakaḷ, koṇṭi, koṇṭimakaḷir, kōṭiyar, kuṟamakaḷ, kuravai, kuṟavar, makaḷir, makār, maṅkaiyar, maṭantai, mutuvāy, nallakavar, nayappupparattai, ōviyar, pāṇar, pāṇi, pāṇmakaṉ, parattai, paricilar, pāṭini, pāṭṭiyar, pēymakaḷir, peṇṭir, porunar, pulavar, talaivi, tuṇaṅkai, vayavar, vayiriyar, vēlaṉ, veṟi, viṟali (yar).*

33. *Naṟ.* 200.4: *mutuvāy kuyavu.*

34. *Puṟ.* 140.3.

35. *Puṟ.* 109.15-17.

36. *Por.* 109 describes the *viṟali* as "swaying to the *pāṇi* (tune for dance) while the king and the *porunar* eat". *Mal.* 538 exhorts *viṟalis* "to praise the Lord of rare strength and the shining chest, whose nature is not to fail. O *viṟalis* of sweet voice, knowing ancient duty, combine, without lapse, while sounding the *marutam* tune on the strings of the small harp of black stem, words that display novelty and rhythm that is harmonious with good music".

37. *Tol. Poruḷatikāram, Ceyyuḷiyal* 501 and 502 describes the members of the family-retinue, called *vāyils:* the *pārppāṉ, pāṅkaṉ, tōḻi, cevvili, kiḻavan* and *kiḻatti* accompany the hero and heroine in pre-marital love (*kāḻavu*), while the *pāṇaṉ, kūttaṉ, viṟali, parattai, aṟivar, kaṇṭōr* and *pārppāṉ* serve the wedded couple (whose love-tie is referred to as *kaṟpu*). *Kaṟpiyal* 178 states that all *vāyils* have as their meaning in life to cause joy which is appropriate to the hero and heroine.

38. *Tol. Poruḷatikāram, Puṟattiṇaiyiyal* 90.

39. Cf. K.V. Zvelebil, 'Vaḷḷi and Murugan—a Dravidian Myth' in *Indo-Iranian Journal* 19 (1977), p. 227-246 as well as by the same author 'The Vaḷḷi and Murugan Myth—Its Development', in *Indo-Iranian Journal* 22 (1980), p. 113-135.

40. The term used here is *pukaḻ* 'fame'.

41. Cf. S.C. Kersenboom-Story, *Journal of Tamil Studies*, No. 19 June, 1981, p .21.

42. Cf. *Puṟ.* 52 where the deity (*kaṭavuḷ*) leaves (*kaiviṭu*) the *kantu*, also *Ak.*, 307 and 287.

43. Cf. *Śrīpraśnasaṃhitā* 49. 468-9: the living presence (*devāsānnidhya*) depends on worship, a worthy residence, devotion and generosity. Another example dates from a few years ago: the famous emerald *liṅga* was stolen from the central shrine of the temple of Tiruvarur. While hectic investigations went on, His Holiness Srī Chandraśekharendra Sarasvatī Śaṅkarācārya of Kāñci Kāmakoṭi Pīṭha ordered another emerald *liṅga* (that was available in the *maṭha*) to be transported to Tiruvarur within twenty-four hours after the last ritual that was performed for the stolen *liṅga;* it would have been inadmissable to interrupt the worship in Tiruvarur even for a single day. Fortunately, the original *liṅga* was recovered in time, purified and worshipped before the lapse of one day.

44. K. Kailasapathy, 1968, p. 235.

45. Cf. Ch. I, p. 52 for the custom of erecting temporary images, and p. 54 for the worship of fallen heroes as part of *pēy*-worship expressed in Teyyam and Bhūta dances. Cf. Ch. II, p. 106 for similar ritual practices for temple-idols or for the *liṅga.*

46. K.V. Zvelebil, *Acta Orientalia* 40, (1979), cf. p. 160.

47. *Kuṟiñ.* 174-5, "women of the dancing ground who experience the *aṇaṅku* of *Neṭuvēl".*

48. *Puṟ.* 259. 5.

49. K.V. Zvelebil, *Acta Orientalia* 40, (1979), cf. p. 157.

50. *Per.* 459.

51. *Naṟ.* 288. 5-7.

52. Cf. Ch. I, p. 6 and n. 22.

53. *Paṭiṟ.* 22.27.

54. *Paṭiṟ.* 13.15.

55. *Mat.* 161.

56. *Paṭiṟ.* 67.11.

57. *Paṭiṟ.* 30.34-6.

58. *PPVM,* 162.

59. *Ak.* 3.36.

60. *Kuṟ.* 78 and *Pat.* 253.

61. Cf. *Mārg* Vol. XXXIV, No. 3, p. 63-75: Balan Nambiar, 'Gods and Ghosts—teyyam and bhūta rituals'. "Ritual dancers in south Canara are called Bhuta-s and in north Kerala Teyyam-s." They are clad in colourful costumes and enormous headgears taking the roles of gods and goddesses. "Though a few of these divinities have been identified with the gods and goddesses of the Hindu Purana-s, the majority of them are earth deities.." Over

350 names of Bhuta-s are known in Tulunadu. An almost equal number of names of Teyyam-s are known in northern Kerala. Teyyam-s and Bhuta-s are unique theatrical performances in which the performer, apart from being a priest with occult and mystical powers, is also a dancer, musician and actor, incorporating in himself the artistic skills of crafts, decoration and painting. Some of the colourfully decorated costumes of these ritual dances are over three metres in diameter and in some cases the height of the head decoration is over eight metres. In these ritual performances, particularly in Teyyam, there are specific systems of choreography incorporating audience participation. Bhuta and Teyyam performances can be classified into ten divisions on the basis of their themes." We will return to these themes later (see further, pp. 53-54). At this point it is interesting to note that one of the themes is connected with hero-worship: "War heroes are deified and made into Teyyam-s and Bhuta-s. The narration of the story of these heroes that is sung at the beginning of the performances is identical to the story depicted in the hero-stone tablets erected to commemorate warriors who died during combat".

62. *Puṟ.* 201.14, cf. also K. Kailasapathy, 1968, p. 56-7.

63. *Ak.* 155.13.

64. Cf. S.C. Kersenboom-Story, *JTS*, No. 19, June, 1981, p. 19-41.

65. The *Kāmasūtra* (date uncertain: between 1st and 6th century A.D.) describes the artistic and erotic refinement that is necessary for both aristocratic ladies and courtesans. The professional courtesan (*gaṇikā, veśya*) is dealt with in great detail. Cf. also Richard Schmidt, *Beiträge zur Indischen Erotik*, Berlin, 1911, especially p. 568-577 on courtesans.

66. The entire ceremony resembles closely the dedication of a devadasi informant performed in 1934 A.D.; this dedication will be discussed in Ch. III, pp. 180-182.

67. The training of Mātavi is described in the *Araṅkēṟṟukātai* of the *Cilappatikāram* (ca. 450 A.D.) and deserves independent treatment. The sophistication is indeed impressive. Of special importance to our investigation are the dancing poses that were performed to the accompaniment of *viḷakku* (lamp) songs. According to the commentator Aṭiyārkkunallār (12th-13th century A.D.) there were fourteen subdivisions of the genre *viḷakku:* he distinguishes three as *vēntuviḷakku* ('king's lamp'), *paṭaiviḷakku* ('war-lamp)' and *ūrviḷakku* ('hometown lamp'). Cf. also V.R. Ramachandra Dikshitar's translation of the *Cilappatikāram*, reprinted by the South Indian Saiva Siddhanta Works Publishing Society, Madras, 1978, p. 104-114 (*Araṅkēṟṟukātai*) and p. 120-134 for the festival for Indra. Even the translation brings out the fact that the five sacred places at which sacrifices were offered seem to have been of indigenous, non-Brahminic origin: 1. *veḷimaṉṟam:* 'open space, pavillion', where could be found many bundles of goods with marks indicative of the quantity, weight and names of their new owners'. 2. *ilañcimaṉṟam:* a miraculous lake, curing diseases. 3. *nēṭuṅkaṉiṉṟamaṉṟam*: another open space where stood a 'tall shining stone'. 4. A thunderous *bhūta* stationed on a cross-road. 5. A pavillion where a doll (*pāvai*) was worshipped. The entire festival, including the dances of the gods that were executed by human performers, would deserve an independent treatment and comparison with village cults, performing arts rooted in oral traditions, Agamic temple ritual and ritual art, and the sophisticated art forms belonging to the royal courts.

68. Cf. Ch. I, part B, pp. 49ff.

69. See for a detailed history of South India, K.A Nilakanta Sastri, *A History of South India*, Oxford University Press, Madras, 1955.

70. K.V. Zvelebil, Leiden, 1975, p. 191.

71. Cf. D.D. Shulman, 'On the Prehistory of Tyāgarāja-Śiva at Tiruvarur' in *Art and Archaeology Research Papers* 13 (1978), 55-58.

72. Cf. Kees W. Bolle, Speaking of a Place, in *Myths and Symbols—Studies in Honor of Mircea Eliade*, eds. J.M. Kitagawa and Ch. M. Long, The University of Chicago Press, 1969, p. 129: ".... unless one understands the primacy of the place, the nature of the sacred in most of Hinduism remains incomprehensible, and the plurality and the variety of gods continues to form an unsolvable puzzle".

73. K.V. Zvelebil, Leiden, 1975, p. 154 ff.
74. Cf. Ch. I., pp. 15ff.
75. K.V. Zvelebil, Leiden, 1975, p. 260.
76. K.V. Zvelebil, Leiden, 1975, p. 155 and n. 163.
77. K.V. Zvelebil, *The Smile of Murugan*, Leiden, 1973, p. 196.
78. Cuntaramūrttināyaṉār is also called *tampirāṉ tōḻaṉ* 'the close friend of god' and there are several instances that prove the preference of Śiva for this *bhakta* over other saintly men, as well as Siva's loyalty towards Cuntaramūrtti. In this he went even as far as to set out in the night for Paravai's house in order to persuade her to accept Cuntaramūrtti back. According to M. Arunachalam, in his *An Introduction to the History of Tamil Literature*, 1974, p. 319, one street in Tiru Arur was called 'the street which gave out the fragrance of the feet of the Lord' in memory of this event. However, we do find also examples of discordant notes like in any close friendship. The saint blames Siva for his temporary blinness in *Tēvāram*, Pat. 95. 2. thus (cf. K.V. Zvelebil, Leiden, 1973, p. 203):

I was sold and bought by you. I am no loan.
I am your slave of my own free will!
You made me blind. Why, Lord, did you take away my sight?
You are to blame! If you will not restore the sight of my other eye—
well, may you then live long.

79. Cf. Ch. I, p. 10; note also the shift from the goddess Korravai who is dancing on the battle-field covered with corpses to Śiva performing this dance accompanied by a female *bhakta* who beats the *tāla* (rhythmic pattern).
80. Cf. K.V. Zvelebil, Leiden, 1975, p. 158-9: "Another matter which strongly influences our choice of date is the striking similarity between Āṇṭāḷ's *Tiruppāvai* and Māṇikkavācakar's *Tiruvempāvai*, both of which are of somewhat unusual type among Tamil compositions. According to J. Filliozat, the priority in this form belongs to the Saivite poem. The most probable date of Āṇṭāḷ would thus be the 9th cent. A.D. She is the authoress of two poems, *Tiruppāvai* in 30 stanzas, and *Nā(y)cciyārtirumoḻi* in 143 stanzas (both in First Thousand). Kṛṣṇa is the hero of both poems, the setting is either Kōvarttaṉam (Govardhana), Yamuṉai (Yamunā), or Maturāpuri (Mathura). *Tiruppāvai* owes its origin to a religious observance among maidens of the cowherd caste: girls who have fasted all night go early in the morning to bathe in the river, and practise certain rites which are said to earn for them good and suitable husbands, and for the country abundant rain".
81. *Piṅkalanikaṇṭu* 5.92 (date: 700-900 A.D.) lists the following persons as *pāṇmakaḷ*: *pāṭiṇi, viṟali, pāṭṭi, mātaṅki, pāṭaṉmakaṭūu.*
82. Cf. Ch. I, pp. 56-60
83. Cf. Ch. I, pp. 14-15
84. Cf. Ch. II, pp. 120-121
85. According to K.K. Pillai, in *The Śūcīndram Temple*, Madras, 1953, p. 228 this hymn was sung by devadasis in Sūcīndram temple.
86. Cf. G.U. Pope, *The Tiruvāçagam*, Oxford, 1900. Fourteen hymns in succession within the corpus of *Tiruvācakam* are taken straight from folk-songs and games mostly played by women; only the *Tiruttacāṅkam* is a direct borrowing from Agamic temple ritual.
87. The performance of Māṇikkavācakar's *Tiruppaḷḷiyeḻucci* by *ōtuvārs* was witnessed by me on 29-12-1982 ca. 5.00 o'clock a.m. in the Śrī Tyāgarājasvāmī temple of Tiruvarur. The repertoire of the devadasis contains a number of hymns called *Mēlukōlupu* which were sung for the same purpose of raising the god in the morning during the month of Mārkaḻi.
88. K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, *A History of South India*, Oxford University Press, 1955, p. 166.
89. C. Collin Davies, *An Historical Atlas of the Indian Peninsula*, Oxford University Press, 1947, p. 28-31.
90. K.V. Zvelebil, Leiden, 1975, p. 177ff.
91. K.V. Zvelebil, Leiden, 1975, p. 189 ff.
92. K.V. Zvelebil, Leiden, 1975, p. 186.

93. Cf. K.V. Zvelebil, Leiden, 1975, p. 166-7.

94. Cf. Ch. I, p. 14-5 and n. 58.

95. K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, *A History of South India*, Oxford University Press, 1955, p. 183.

96. K.V. Zvelebil, Leiden, 1975, p. 186.

97. K.V. Zvelebil, Leiden, 1975, p. 189 ff.

98. K.V. Zvelebil, Leiden, 1975, p. 189-190.

99. E. te Nijenhuis, *Indian Music, History and Structure*, Leiden, 1974, p. 3 ff.

100. See Ch. I, p. 29-30.

101. K.V. Zvelebil, Leiden, 1975, p. 196-7.

102. K.V. Zvelebil, Wiesbaden, 1974, p. 197-8: "*Ulā* 'Procession'. A very interesting and productive genre: A poem in *kaliveṇpā* which describes the patron (or god) going in procession around the streets of a city, while women of varying ages (*makaḷir paruvam*) fall in love with him; their love is not returned....The earliest *ulā* is by Cēramāṉ Perumāḷ, a Saiva devotional poet of the 8th cent..... The genre was developed.... especially by Oṭṭakūttar.... who was the court poet of the three Cholas." The procession that is described in the genre *ulā* is of utmost importance for the devadasi tradition: *ulā* can be compared to the ritual procession called *utsava* in which devadasis participated.

103. *Inscriptions of the Madras Presidency* (*IMP*) Vol. II, 55, 1893 registers a daily allowance of paddy for a group of actors who should perform the *Rājarājeśvaranāṭakam* during the festival of the month Vaikāci (May-June).

104. R. Nagaswamy, *Gangaikondacholapuram*, State Department of Archaeology, Government of Tamilnadu, 1970, p. 1ff. The city and temple of Gangaikondacholapuram were founded by Rajendra I (1012-1044 A.D.) to commemorate his victorious march to the Ganges, and served as capital of the Chola empire for almost 250 years.

105. The date of the commentator Aghoraśivācārya is fairly well-known (ca. 1158 A.D.), according to K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, *A History of South India*, Oxford, 1955, p. 343.

106. K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, *A History of South India*, Oxford, 1955, p. 192;

107. K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, *op. cit.*, 1955, p. 192.

108. T.N. Subramaniam, *South Indian Temple Inscriptions*, 3 vols. GOML, Madras, 1953-57; the introduction mentions a dancing girl named Caturi Manikkam who threw herself down from the temple tower to establish the right to land given to her as *jīvitam*.

109. *A.R.E.* No. 101 of 1925.

110. Cf. A. Swaminathan, Temple Lands and Society (with special reference to the Chola period) in *JTS*, 20, December, 1981, p. 19-20.

111. *IMP* Vol. II 23 of 1895.

112. *IMP* Vol. II 306 of 1907.

113. K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, *The Cōḷas*, Madras 1955, p. 555-557.

114. *IMP* Vol. II 55 of 1893.

115. *IMP* Vol. II 421 of 1912 registers a gift of money for the recitation of *Tiruvempāvai* on *Tiruvātirai* in the month of *Mārkaḷi*, and for the maintenance of the *Paṅkuṇi* festival.

116. Cf. A. Swaminathan, in *JTS*, 20, 1981, p. 22-23.

117. *SII* No. 141, 1922 states that a dancer with *śūla muttirai* was discovered in court and sent back to her temple.

118. S. Ponnusamy, *Sri Thyagaraja Temple, Thiruvarur*, state Department of Archaeology, Government of Tamilnadu, 1972, p. 33-34; the author considers Aṇukkiyār Paravai Naṅkaiyār a temple dancer because of her personal name Paravai which is traditionally connected with Tiruvarur; however, we prefer to regard her as a court dancer because of her honorary title *aṇukki*, and because of the fact that she travelled with the king in his chariot.

119. S. Ponnusamy, *op. cit.*, p. 51 ftn. 25: Paravai Naṅkaiyār donated numerous ornaments weighing thousands of *kaḻañjus:* the ornaments consisted of gold, 428 pearls, 7 rubies and 36 diamonds.

120. S. Ponnusamy, *op. cit.*, p. 32-33.

121. S. Ponnusamy, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

122. *IMP* Vol. II 92-1911, 94-1911, 50-1914, 36-1895; *IMP* Vol. I, 428-1909, 336-1911, 338-1911, 345-1911, 347-1911, 305-1909.

123. *IMP* Vol. II 467-Śaka 1070, 157-1913; *IMP* Vol. I 414-1902.

124. Cf. Ch. I, p. 15-6.

125. Cf. Ch. I, p. 23.

126 *IMP* Vol. II 211-192, 212-1912.

127. Cf. Ch. III, p. 183.

128. *Sri Dikshita Kirtanamala*, Part IX, ed. A. Sundaram Iyer, Madras, 1977, p. 33-34, *kīrtanā* no. 18 *Śrī Tyāgarājasya* in *rāga rudrapriyā*, and *tāla miśra cāpu*, the temple dancers are described as *vimala rudragaṇikā nartana vinoda* 'delight in the dancing of the spotless *rudragaṇikā*'.

129. *Pudukkottai Epigraphic Inscriptions* no. 20, dated 1145 A.D. The performance of the rite of *dipārādhanā* accompanied by a small dance composition (*puṣpāñjali* 'flower obisance') was recently executed by a priest who would wave several lamps, and by a devadasi who would wave the pot-lamp (*kumbhārati*) and another devadasi who would perform *puṣpāñjali*. It seems, however, that another tradition was followed in Tiruvarur where the entire *dipārādhanā* was performed by devadasis. Cf. Ch. II, p. 168, n. 94.

130. Cf. Ch. I. p. 66 and n. 306.

131. S. Ponnusamy, *op. cit.*, p. 62

132. S. Ponnusamy, *op. cit.*, p. 62 and n. 107.

133. S. Ponnusamy, op. cit., p. 62 and n. 106.

134. Cf. Ch. III, p. 181-2.

135. The following list of terms was culled out from Vol. III of *South Indian Inscriptions*. As the terms were given in transcription only, it has not always been possible to give the correct Tamil form. We may infer that the following terms indicate (female) temple-dancers and servants: *nakkaṉ*, meaning either 'naked' (from Skt. *nagna*), or 'our elder sister' (from Ta. **nam akkaṉ*); *canti-k-kūttaṉ*—performer of *canti-k-kūttu* (*canti*>Skt. *sandhi* meeting junction); *cokka-t-taḷiyilār*—servant belonging to the temple of Śiva; *tēvaṭimai*—servant of god; *pōkiyar*—concubine (?), *tattaḷi koṭṭuvar*—loud drummers (*tattaḷi* be agitated, vacillate'); *śrībali koṭṭuvar*—drummers at the *śrībali; taḷi-c-ceri-peṇṭukal*—women belonging to the streets of the temple.

136. *Akamārkka* is explained by the *S.I.I.* Vol. III as 'dance performed in the presence of the gods'. The term *kuṭaviḷakku* indicates most probably the combined performance of *kumbhārati* and *puṣpāñjali;* cf. also the training in *viḷakku* dances which the dancer Mātavi of the *Cilappatikāram* had to undergo (see Ch. I, p. 16 n. 67.)

137. Cf. Ch. II, p. 118 According to a commentary on the *Kāmikāgama*, *nṛttaṇam* did comprise three types: *śuddham*, *miśram* and *kēvalam.*

138. *IMP* Vol. II 233-1907.

139. *IMP* Vol. II 421-1912, Vol. I 128-1912.

140. *IMP* Vol. II 54-1906.

141. Cf. Kapila Vatsyayan, *Traditional Indian Theatre: Multiple Streams*, New Delhi 1980, p. 17-20. The origins of the Cākyars can perhaps be traced back to pre-Sanskrit days, or to the period of the *Cilappatikāram*. Cākyars belong to the Ambalavāsi (temple-dwellers) caste, an intremediate group between the Brahmins and the Nairs.

142. Personal communication from K.V. Zvelebil.

143. *Pañca marapu*, Text and translation edited by Nā. Makāliṅkam, Jemini Accakam, Kumbhakonam, 1975.

144. Cf. E. te Nijenhuis, *Indian Music, History and Structure*, Leiden, 1974, p. 116-117; According to Sambamoorthy and Raghavan *daru* songs may be in some way connected with the ancient *dhruva* songs, i.e. the ancient stage songs described in the thirty-second chapter of the *Nāṭyaśāstra*. Sambamoorthy distinguishes seven types of *daru.*

145. *Koothanool*, edited by S.D.S. Yogiar, Tamilnadu Sangita Nataka Sangam, Madras,

1969; cf. also A.N. Perumal, *Tamil Drama*, Madras, 1981, who doubts the genuineness of this edition.

146. Cf. K.V. Zvelebil, Leiden, 1973, p. 85ff.

147. It distinguishes between *iyal tāḷam:* 5 original *tālas* and 35 derived *tālas*, and *āṭṭa tāḷam*: 108 *tālas* of Agastya and 52 *tālas* of others.

148. These *paṇs* were a matter of discussion among musical experts in the Pann Research Conference held by the Tamil Icai Cankam in 1975. *The Hindu* of December 23, 1975 published the following review:. "Discussion centred round the fixing of the ragas for some of the ancient Panns. Out of the 103 Panns mentioned in the scriptural texts., only 24 have so far been identified. In the case of four Panns, viz. Kolli, Kolli Kowvanam, Gandharam and Piyandai Gandharam, the tradition of the Oduvars is to sing all of them in Navroze". This situation is characteristic for a number of living performing arts; there, too, exists a wide gap between theory and practice.

149. Cf. E. te Nijenhuis, *op. cit.*, p. 1-12 for a concise survey of Sanskrit literature on musical theory.

150. Both music and dance traditions employ the terms *lakṣaṇā* (prescriptive theory) and *lakṣya* applied theory: the gap between the two is usually considerable. Another category which accounts for the multivalence of the performing arts is the acknowledgement of two streams of change and development, namely *mārga* (standardised) and *deśī* (folk, regional, non-standardised).

151. Several reasons and several grades of slavery are recorded in the inscriptions. Some people sold themselves voluntarily (cf. *SII* 218-1915 and 219-1925, *A.R.E.* 1925 Vol. II, 18), while some people were presented to the temple as a gift. *A.R.E.* II, 21-149, 1936-7 records that a *madhyastha* of the village of Nandivarman maṅgalam presented to the temple of Vayalur (Trichy) three women to sing Tirupadiyam and to serve as *kavarippina* (chauri-bearers) to god Parameśvara; he had acquired these women six years earlier.

152. K.V. Zvelebil, Leiden, 1975, p. 135.

153. A Swaminathan, Temple Lands and Society, in *JTS* 20, 1981, p. 19-20.

154. S. Ponnusamy, *op.cit.*, p. 60.

155. *SII* Vol. II, No. 66.

156. The most important among them being *A Forgotten Empire*, R. Sewell, reprint New Delhi, 1980.

157. K.V. Zvelebil, Leiden, 1975, p. 233-237.

158. K.V. Zvelebil, Wiesbaden, 1974, p.109 ff.

159. An example is given by K.V. Zvelebil (Wiesbaden, 1974, p. 109) from *Tiruppukaḻ* 418:

tirumakaḷu lāvum irupuyamu rāri
tirumaruka nāmap perumāḷ kāṇ

The iṇdigenous Tamil prosodic pattern is

′= = —/ ′— —/ ′= = —/ ′— —
′= = —/ ′— —/ = —/ ′—

In addition, the lines have the following *cantam* (<Skt. *chandas*) or a rigidly set pattern of rhythm based on syllabic quantity: tána tána tánā'na/ tána tána tánā'na / tána tána tánā'na/ tána tá'nā, i.e. ⏑⏑ ⏑⏑⏑⏑—⏑/ ⏑⏑ ⏑⏑⏑⏑—⏑/ ⏑⏑ ⏑⏑⏑⏑—⏑/ ⏑⏑—— Observe that in this way, each line has a double organisation: in terms of *acai* organised into feet (*cīr*), which is the original Tamil metrical structure; and in terms of syllables organized into regular rhythmic groups purely on the basis of quantity, whether short or long, which represents the impact of the Sanskritic metrical structure. This rhythmical grouping was employed by the choreographer Kandappa Pillai (1899-1941) to suit the five basic groupings (*gati*) of a rhythmical pattern (*tāla*); these groupings can be in 3, 4, 5, 7, and 9 *akṣaras* (counts) which are recited in the following manner: *tisra gati* (grouping in 3)

as *ta ki te*, or, *kaṇṭa gati* (grouping in 5) as *ta ke ta ki te*. In this fashion language, metrics, tala and choreography make an all inclusive rhythmical blend and impact.

160. Cf. K.V. Zvelebil, Wiesbaden, 1974, p. 110-111.

161. Cf. K.V. Zvelebil, Wiesbaden, 1974, p. 193 ff.

162. K.V. Zvelebil, Wiesbaden, 1974, p. 193.

163. With reference to traditional Hinduism cultural anthropologists and sociologists make often use of the complementary concepts of "great", i.e. codified in the scriptures, and "little"i.e. non-codified. locally bound tradition.

164. All examples are taken from K.V. Zvelebil, Wiesbaden, 1974, p. 194 ff., who enumerates and discusses all 96 *prabandhas*.

165. T.V. Mahalingam, *Administration and Social Life under Vijayanagar*, University of Madras, 1975 p. 20ff.

166. Smt. P.R. Thilagam told me that it is still the privilege of her family to wear the head-cloth at the occasion of the start of the *rathotsava* (procession on a huge temple chariot). When all is prepared to set out for the procession a devadasi of her house should come, mount the car and offer some flowers. Only then the god seems 'willing' to commence his journey. Nowadays this ritual is still performed and Smt. Thilagam fulfills her role at every *rathotsava* that is held; for this ritual service she receives as *prasāda* (gift) a new ritual headcloth and food that has been enjoyed by the god and that is called *koṇṭinaivētyam* for this occasion.

167. T.V. Mahalingam, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

168. S. Chatterjee, *Devadasi*, Calcutta, 1945, p. 39-40.

169. Personal communication from the late Śrī V.S. Tyāgarāja Mutaliyār, trustee of the Śrī Tyāgarājasvāmī temple of Tiruvarur.

170. Available in manuscript form in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris (under *Port. No.* 65); translated and edited by R. Sewell in *A Forgotten Empire*, reprint New Delhi, 1980, p. 235-291. This work does not only present the chronicle of Domingo Paes (ca. 1510 A.D.), but also that of Fernao Nuniz (ca. 1535 A.D.)

171. This type of service is termed *rājopacāra* within the structure of Agamic ritual and was one of the traditional tasks of the devadasis (cf. also Ch. II, p. 113).

172. See: R. Sewell, *op. cit.*, p. 269-273.

173. This ceremony seems to be a luxury version of the ubiquitous ritual of *kumbhārati*, the waving of the pot-lamp which can be considered the most characteristic task of the traditional devadasi.

174. We may infer that the idol inside the shrine is the goddess of victory (Vijayalakṣmī or Durgā), cf. R. Sewell, *op. cit.*, p. 265.

175. At the conclusion of a ritual procession it is customary to remove the destructive workings of evil eye and other evil influences by means of *kumbhārati*, before the deity is returned to the *sanctum* inside the temple.

176. Cf. Ch. I., p. 77 n. 170.

177. Cf. Ch. I, p. 10 and Ch. I., p. 50ff

178. Cf. R. Sewell, *op. cit.*, p. 241-42.

179. Cf. R. Sewell, *op. cit.*, p. 270.

180. See for the position of women in the royal court: T.V. Mahalingam, *op. cit.*, p. 39-48. See also: R. Sewell, *op. cit.*, p. 247-248.

181. It seems that wrestling was considered one of the important feats of 'grand' social or cultural functions. The tradition of wrestlers being attached to the palace continued in Mysore into the twentieth century. The well-known palace dancer Smt. Tāyammā belonged to a traditional family of wrestlers, a fact which is still echoed by her name Jeṭṭi Tāyammā (*jeṭṭi* meaning wrestler). The tradition of wrestling was important, too, in the performance of temple festivals (*utsava*). Even today, the *nāgasvara* players initiate the departure of the temple chariot by sounding a composition called *mallāri*. Both the name of the composition that reminds us of the word *malla* (wrestler) and the spontaneous explanation of its

meaning by the musicians that this composition is in a fact a 'wrestling with god' to make him set out, indicate the underlying notion that wrestling belongs to such ritual occasions.

182. T.V. Mahalingam, *op. cit.*, p. 72-73.

183. T.V. Mahalingam, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

184. Among other works (see T.V. Mahalingam, *op. cit.*, p. 74-75) the *Saṅgītacintāmaṇi*, *Saṅgītaśudhākara*, *Rasārṇavasudhākara* and the compositions and works by the *Tallapakam* composers (among whom Annamācārya wrote *Adhyātmasaṃkīrtanalu*, *Śṛṅgārasaṃkīrtanalu* and *Śṛṅgāra mañjarī*) belong all to the Vijayanagara period. The *Dāsa kūta* movement that had its roots in the *Haridāsa* devotional singers of the twelfth century included eminent musicians like Purandara Dāsa; the total of his compositions is estimated at—475.000. The emperor Rāmā Rāya wrote a theoretical work called *Svaramelakalānidhi*. Cf. also E. te Nijenhuis, *op. cit.*, p. 6-9.

185. This shift of state patronage from Saivism to Vaishnavism did not pass without opposition. According to T.V. Mahalingam (*op. cit.*, p. 224-5) the controversies took such a serious shape that the priests of the Chidambaram temple climbed the towers and threw themselves down. In this manner twenty of them were killed. The regent Kṛṣṇappa Nāyaka of Ceñji became so angry at this event, that he ordered the rest of the priests to be shot. This, too,was accomplished. Meanwhile a woman became so passionately involved in the quarrel that she cut her own throat.

186. The hero of the *madhura bhakti* approach is usually the god Krishna. The most outspoken examples of this emotional-cum-artistic mood are the *padas* of the composer Kṣetrayya (17th cent.) His compositions concern mostly Kṛṣṇa (as) Muvva Gopāla and have been of major influence for the artistic profile of the repertoire of the dance concert (*catir kaccēri*) that was performed by the devadasis.

187. Cf. K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, *A History of South India*, Oxford Univertity Press, 1955, p. 295.

188. Cf. V.N. Hari Rao, *Kōil Oḻuku, The Chronicle of Śrīraṅgam Temple with historical notes*, Madras, Rochouse & Sons, 1961.

189. Cf. Ch. II, p. 122-4.

190. Cf. Ch. I. p. 24 and n. 89.

191. In the *prabandha Aḻakar Kiḷḷai Viṭutūtu* by P. Chokkanātha Piḷḷai (18th cent.) the heroine of the story advises her messenger (a parrot) to address her beloved (Lord Murukaṇ) in Telugu; the reason is obvious: the wives understand only Tamil and not the 'more sophisticated' Telugu.

192. Cf. K.V. Zvelebil, Wiesbaden, 1974, p. 220ff.

193. The *viṟaliviṭutūtu* belongs in fact to the *prabandhas* proper. It forms part of a broader genre of *tūtu* i.e. messenger poems. The earliest Tamil full-fledged *tūtu* poem may have been Kumāracuvāmi Avatāṉi's *Teyvaccilaiyār viṟaliviṭutūtu* in honour of a Nāyaka agent in Tirnelveli composed as early as the end of the 16th century (cf. K.V. Zvelebil, Wiesbaden 1974, p. 218).

194. Cf. Ch. I., p. 23.

195. For example, we would like to suggest a tentative historical connection between the *vaṇṇam* sung by the bard and accompanied by the *viṟalis* (*Puṟ.* 152, 13-17), the *prabandha* called *vaṇṇam*, and the later *kīrttaṇam* (cf. K.V. Zvelebil, Wiesbaden, 1974, p. 217 and p. 221-2), as well as the composition called *varṇam* performed in dance concerts. The passage in *Puṟanāṉūṟu* 152, 13-17 gives the following description of the participations of the *viṟalis* in the performance of the *vaṇṇam:* "I shall sing a *vaṇṇam, viṟalis;* you (plur.) treat the drum (*muḻā*) with earth (*maṇ*), set up the *paṇ* (melody type) on the lute (*yāḻ*); beat the sound of the *kaṇviṭutūmpu* drum that resembles the sound of the male elephant; beat the *ellari* drum; beat the tambourine (*ākuli*); sound gently the one-eyed *patalai* drum".

196. A broad study of the dramatic traditions of *Yakṣagāna*, *Bhāgavata Mēla Nāṭaka* and *Kuṟavañci* would perhaps yield a coherent picture of the historical origin and interrelatedness of these compositions that belong to the sphere of the performing arts.

197. Cf. Ch. I., p. 32 and n. 159.

198. Cf. K.V. Zvelebil, Wiesbaden, 1974, p. 220.

199. The work of Dr. S. Seetha is dedicated to especially this period of South Indian music, cf. Dr. S. Seetha, *Tanjore as a Seat of Music* (*During the* 17*th*, 18*th, and* 19*th Centuries*), University of Madras, 1981. Prof. P. Sambamoorthy's publications deal almost all with classical South Indian (Karnatic) music. For a detailed account of the lives and works of the three great classical composers Tyāgarāja, Muttusvāmī Dīkṣitar and Śyāma Śāstri, see for instance, Dr. V. Raghavan, An Introductory Thesis 'Saint Tyagaja' in *The Spiritual Heritage of Tyāgarāja* by C. Ramanujachari, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, 1966; Dr. V. Raghavan, *Sri Muthuswamy Dikshitacaritam Mahakavyam*, Madras, 1980, a Sanskrit work on Muttusvāmī Dīkṣitar's life, with an introductory article on the composer in English (p. 7-36); T.L. Venkatarama Aiyar, *Muthuswami Dikshitar*, New Delhi, 1979; Vidya Shankar, *Shyama Sastry*, New Delhi, 1980.

200. While the entire North of India was in the hands of the Mughal ruler Aurangzeb, Śivājī controlled the whole of the Konkan, Bellary, Kopal, Sira, Bangalore, Kolar, a share in Tanjore, Vellore, Arni and Ginji, with the exception of the Portuguese possessions of Goa, Chaul, Salsette and Bassein. In the southern-most part of India Tanjore was the only principality under Hindu rule. Cf. C. Collin Davies, *An Historical Atlas of the Indian Peninsula*, Oxford University Press, 1949, and S. Seetha, *op. cit.*, p.1-24.

201. Cf. T. Sankaran, The Nagaswaram Tradition Systematised by Ramaswami Dikshtiar, in *The Musical Heritage of Sri Muthuswami Dikshitar*, Ed. by T. S. Parthasarathy Indian Musicological Society, Bombay and Baroda, Jan. 1976, p. 16-21.

202. Cf. Ch.I., p. 28 and n. 128.

203. *Pallaki Seva Prabandham*, P. Sambamoorthy, Madras, 1955.

204. The song *Vinnaviṃpavē* could easily be taken up as a *padam* in the concert repertoire. It describes the longing of the goddess for Tyāgarāja and the various possibilities that she and her friends consider to approach the Lord who is seated in full court.

205. Cf. Ch.II, p. 151ff

206. Smt. P. R. Thilagam was enabled to stage the opera in the temple of Chidambaram during the Arudra festival in December 1982. An edition of her tradition was undertaken by V. Premlata, *Tiyākēcar Kuṟavañci* (in Tamil, with introduction in English), Tanjore Saraswati Mahal Library—130, 1970.

207. By the time of Sarabhoji II (1798-1832) the royal preference seems to have shifted towards Lord Bṛhatīśvara and his temple in Tanjore. A great number of *padavarṇas* were composed in praise of *Śrī Bṛhatīśvara* and the king. Sivakkoḻuntu Deśikar composed the operatic ballet *Sarabhendra Bhūpāla Kuṟavañci* that was enacted in the great temple until well in the 20th century. The two dancers Smt. Kāmukaṇṇammā and Smt. Kamalāmbāḷ shown on the cover photograph of this publication were part of the cast of this ballet. The picture dates from ca. 1920 and shows them in their costume used for the enactment of the *Sarabhendra Bhūpāla Kuṟavañci*. Our informant Smt. Raṅganāyaki said that these costumes are exceptionally rich; devadasis of smaller temples used to wear more simple costumes and only a great number of black bead necklaces for ornament.

Another drama which used to be performed regularly in the great temple of Tanjore was the *Maṇmatha nāṭaka;* cf. also the *KāmaṇKūttu* tradition of Tiruttani (Ch.I. p. 66 Ch. II. p. 135).

208. Rāmasvāmī Dīkṣitar was employed for a number of years by the Śrī Tyāgarājasvāmi temple of Tiruvarur but agreed to be employed later by Muthukrishna Mudaliar of Manali. The life of his son was spent performing in temples all over the South (and even in the North of India) composing music on the local deities as well as enriching the court music of Tanjore and Ettayapuram.

209. Cf. Ch.III, p. 184, n. 21.

210. Cf. K. V. Zvelebil, Leiden, 1975, p. 255-6.

211. Cf. S. Seetha, Music and Dance during the Time of Vijayaraghava Nayak of Tanjore, in *The Journal of the Madras Music Academy*, Vol. XLVIII, 1977, p. 139-150.

212. Some of these dance-forms can perhaps be identified with still existing traditions like *pēraṇi* or with dance sequences like *kōrvai*; a great number of choreographical types seems to be lost, however, beyond recovery.

213. This basic dance training comprises a number of exercises in dance-steps that are grouped in 'onomatopoeietic' families that indicate the floor contact of the feet and the rhythmical duration of the step. After mastering all steps (ca. 120), the pupil proceeds to study dance compositions in the sequence of *alārippū*, *jatisvaram*, *śabdam*, *varṇam*, *padam*, *jāvali*, *tillāṇā* and *śloka*. These compositions are arranged so that the different aspects of rhythm (*tāla*), expression (*abhinaya*) and melody-bound emotion (*rasa* and *bhāva*) can develop to the full.

214. Cf. J. Higgins, *The Music of Bharata Natyam*, Vol. I and II, University Microfilms International, Ann Arbor; London, 1973.

215. Cf. *Adi Bharata Kala Manjari, Pancha Murthi and Nava Sandhi Kavuthuvams*, edited by Tanjore K. P. Kittappa and K. P. Sivanandam, Madras, 1964.

216. Cf. Gaṅgāmuttu Naṭṭuvaṉār, *Naṭaṇāti vātya rañcaṇam*, a treatise on dance and dance training written in the end of the 19th century. Unfortunately the book is available to me in a handcopied version which does not state its date and place of publication. Gaṅgāmuttu Naṭṭuvaṉār mentions, for example, *kautvams* for Campantar, Nacciyār and Cokkar. Cf. also V. Raghavan, 'Bharata Natya' in *Journal of the Madras Music Academy*, Vol. XLV, 1974, p. 233-262, p. 246-7.

217. Cf. Ch. II, p. 127-8.

218. Cf. S. Seetha, *Tanjore as a Seat of Music*, Madras, 1981, p. 120 and plate II (a) and (b).

219. Isaac Johnson seems to have been employed since January 27th, 1841 and received a monthly salary of Rs. 15; another example is Lady Catherine who was employed since January 8th, 1828 (i.e. for 27 years) and who received a monthly salary of Rs. 5!

220. Cf. also S. Seetha, *Tanjore as a Seat of Music*, Madras, 1981, p. 111-2. Several rulers took interest in Western music to the extent of studying it themselves. The instruments that became particularly popular were the violin, flute, harmonium and even piano and guitar. The influence of the violin (fiddle) and the harmonium has proven to be lasting. In the temples, too, an impression of western music was accepted with interest: An *ōtuvār* from Piranmalai who stayed with the great Meenakshisundaram Pillai at Tanjavur and elsewhere sang one day "a song composed to an English tune by Mambazha Kavichinga Navalar (māmpaḻa kaviciṅka nāvalar). Immediately Srī Piḷḷai felt an urge to compose a similar song in the same tune in honour of his illustrious patron, Śrī Deśikar. That song so impressed the inmates of the Mutt that it was sung in chorus every day thereasfter while Deśikar returned to his state-room from the temple and pronounced his blessing on the devotees present" (S. K. Guruswamy, *A Poet's Poet*, Madras 1976, p. 104). The event took place in 1873-4; this anecdote is by courtesy of K.V. Zvelebil.
Another curious example of the influence of Western music on Karnatic music is found in the 'experimental' compositions of Muttusvami Diksitar called '*Nōṭṭu Svara Sāhitya*'; these combine Western notes with *svara* names and Sanskrit text. An edition entitled *Nōttu Svara Sahityas of Sri Muttusvami Dikshitar* by V. Raghavan and P. Ramachandran, The Music Academy, Madras, 1977, gives thirty six of such compositions.

221. Smt. Raṅganāyaki taught me how to dance with her several patterns.

222. Cf. Arthur Miles, *The Land of the Lingam*, London, 1933, p. 192: "General Burton tells in *An Indian Olio* how a man built a house at Bhavani, and established a set of Nautch girls whose accomplishments extended to singing "God save the King". This was kept up by their descendants, so that when the General visited the place in 1852, he was greeted by the whole party bedizened in all its finery squalling the National Anthem."

223. The *nalaṅku* songs are sung at wedding ceremonies and form a large part of the traditional repertoire, cf. also further Ch.I. p. 66.

224. *Gobbi pāṭṭu* might be compared to the *Tiruttoṇokkam* of Māṇikkavācakar (see Ch. I, p. 23).

225. Cf. Ch.I, p. 66 ff. and Ch. II, p. 151 ff.

226. Cf. Ch. II, p. 151 ff. for compositions like *puṣpāñjali, eccarikai* and *cūrṇikai.*

227. Many authors who wrote from the Europocentric Christian background indulge in moralistic statements about the tradition of devadasis; sometimes one is tempted to believe that their reports were exaggerated to the extent of serving as an illustration of the immoral practices of the Hindus. Therefore the majority of these sources have remained outside the consideration of this study. Abbé Dubois, however, seems to manifest a surprisingly broad-minded critical spirit, and can be said to have performed highly valuable 'fieldwork' in the modern sense by his close association and intimate knowledge of the Hindus.

228. Cf. Ch.I, p. 50 ff.

229. Cf. Abbé Dubois, *Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies,* translated by Henry K. Beauchamp, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1978, p. 148-9.

230. Cf. Abbé Dubois, *op. cit.,* p.f310; according to him the translation of this saying is 'To have intercourse with a prostitute is a virtue which takes away sin', however, *darśana* (Skt.) does not mean intercourse but 'seeing'.

231. Cf. Ch.I, p. 66 ff.

232. Cf. Ch.II, p. 122-4.

233. Cf. Ch. I., p. 38, p. 64.

234. Cf. Abbé Dubois, *op. cit.,* p. 602.

235. Louis Jacolliot, *Voyage au pays des perles,* Paris, 1879, p. 279: "..je remarquai plusieurs viéilles Kaly-youga-Parvady, c'est-á-dire épouses mortelles de Śiva, qui, le signe du dieu imprimé sur la poitrine, se promenaient fièrement...."

236. H. Jensen, *A Classified Collection of Tamil Proverbs,* Madras & London, 1897, No. 1398, by courtesy of K. V. Zvelebil.

237. Cf. especially the data in *Śrīpraśnasaṃhitā,* Ch. II, p. 111 ff.

238. H. Jensen, *op. cit.,* No. 555, by courtesy of K. V. Zvelebil.

239. Personal communication from Smt. Rajalaksmi, former devadasi of the Oṭaiyavar temple in Madras, and trained as a classical singer.

240. V. Raghavan, 'Bharata Natyam—Classic Indian Dance', in "*Sound and Shadow*" Vol. II, No. 6.

241. A. Eschmann, H. Kulke, G. C. Tripathi, *The Cult of Jagannath and the Regional Tradition of Orissa.,* New Delhi, 1978, p. 82.

242. Cf. A. Eschmann, H. Kulke, G.C. Tripathi, *op. cit.,* p. 82, and 9 (Singer, 1972, p. 47).

243. Cf. K. V. Zvelebil, *The Irula (Ėṛla) Language, Part* II, Wiesbaden, 1979, p. 86.

244. W. Th. Elmore, *Dravidian Gods in Modern Hinduism,* The Christian Literature Society, Madras, 1925, p. ix.

245. W. Th. Elmore, *op. cit.,* p. x.

246. The use of the term Dravidian is a matter of great controversy. At this stage of Hinduism it is almost impossible to separate Dravidian from non-Dravidian gods, or oppose Aryan gods to Dravidian gods. Only very extreme examples defy this thesis. It is however possible to study the religion and cults of the Dravidian speaking people; and the unique differences that are in contrast with non-Dravidian speaking peoples may indicate an autochthonous base. However, the Dravidians were once spread all over India and may have left traces in Pan-Indian mythology, on the other hand the influence of Sanskrit has been omnipresent and has determined Indian culture to a decisive extent. When we employ here the term 'Dravidian' we are aware of this complex cultural mélange of different strata of culture in time, ethnicity, language and sophistication; in this context, however, the term has been used to indicate local, Dravidian-speaking bound cults and religious practices. Cf. also K. V. Zvelebil, Mythologie der Tamilen und anderer Drawidisch Sprechender

Vōlker, in *Wörterbuch der Mythologie*, herausgegeben von H. W. Haussig, Stuttgart, 1982, p. 827-950, esp. p. 827-846.

247. The complex pantheon of village gods has been treated in great detail by M. L. Reiniche in her study on the village cults of Mel Ceval (*mēlaccēval*), a village of 3,500 inhabitants in Tirunelveli. Her work, *Les dieux et les hommes*, Paris, 1979, deals with the several gods and goddesses and the different symbolisms connected with time, locus and lineage.

248. W. Th. Elmore, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

249. One traditional opinion concerning the importance of idol worship says: *pratīmā svalpabuddhīnām*, i.e. 'idols are for those of weak intellect'.

250. A full description is found in W. Th. Elmore, *op. cit.*, p. 13-19.

251. Cf. *Autour de la Déesse*, ed. M. Biardeau, Puruṣārtha no. 5, Paris, 1981, esp. p. 83-137 by B.E.F. Beck.

252. W. Th. Elmore, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

253. The entire ceremony of exorcism is described by Elmore, *op. cit.*, p. 47-53, and offers close resemblances with the type of exorcism that is found in *Caṅkam* literature; in the latter an important role is played by the *mutuvāy peṇṭir*, and by the *vēlaṉ*.

254. M.L. Reiniche makes mention of a special band (*mēḷam*) for the musical accompaniment of rituals performed for the *pēys*. This *mēḷam* is called *Naiyāṇṭimēḷam* 'band of ridicule' (*op. cit.*, p. 244).

255. Cf. Balan Nambiar, 'Gods and Ghosts-teyyam and bhuta rituals' in *Marg* Vol. XXXIV No. 3., p. 62-73.

256. Cf. Santosh Chatterjee, *Devadasi*, Calcutta, 1945, p. 51-59.

257. Cf. M.L. Reiniche, *op. cit.*, p. 244-5: the *villuppāṭṭu* (bow song) party is specialised in singing the stories of the gods; it is composed of six people, one of them is the lead singer (called *pulavar*) and the other five form a supporting choir. The main instrument is an enormous bow (ca. two meters) adorned with little bells. The *pulavar* is seated behind the bow, at his right the man who beats the little bells and at his left a drummer playing the pot drum. Three men are seated behind this group and play different percussion instruments: the *uṭukku* (a small drum), *calar* (cymbals) and sticks.

258. Cf. M.L. Reiniche, *op. cit.*, p. 243-4.

259. Cf. M.L. Reiniche, *op. cit.*, p. 245.

260. Cf. W. Th. Elmore, *op. cit.*, p. 145.

261. Cf. Ch. III, p. 179 and n. 1: Ch. II, p. 233.

262. The pole plays an important part in rituals of varying degree of sophistication. The *talaikkōl* pole or staff was worshipped by the Chola king of *Cilappatikāram* and the initiation ceremony of the dancer Mātavi was performed by worshipping this *talaikkōl*. In the Seraikella festival of today (of Ch. I, p. 64) a *jarjara* is prepared for the formal inauguration of the festival: the *jarjara* consists of a red banner tied, along with some mango leaves, to the top of a tall and green bamboo staff. This ritual closely resembles the more sophisticated inauguration of a Agamic temple festival by means of *dhvajārohana* (cf. Ch. II, p. 121) The importance of this type of pole is a recurrent theme in several forms of ritual, and deserves to be studied independently.

263. Cf. M.L. Reiniche, *op. cit.*, p. 178.

264. Cf. W. Th. Elmore, *op. cit.*, p. 50, and B. Nambiar, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

265. Cf. W. Th. Elmore, *op. cit.*, p. 24, ftn. 1 : 'More commonly called *bainedu*. The *asadis* have no part here. There is still another division of story-tellers called *kommu vandlu*, hornblowers. They recite the Shepherds Purana, but do not infringe on the duties of either *asadis* or *bainedus*.

266. The polution by saliva is one of the most serious ritual defilements.

267. W. Th. Elmore, *op. cit.*, p. 22; after the sacrifice of a buffalo has been accepted by Bangaramma 'the people dance like demons while the drums and horns keep up the wildest din. A strange custom is now observed. The Madigas, who are outcastes, begin to revile caste people, using the vilest language. They certainly are adepts at invective, and make

good use of their opportunity. The caste people not only expect this berating, but they demand it. If the Madigas show any reluctance to begin, the caste people will beat them with ropes and sticks to compel them to perform their duty'.

268. The combination of sari-cloth and bodice is very auspicious since it indicates the state of a married woman whose husband is alive. Traditionally, a woman should wear only a single piece of white cloth as soon as she has become a widow. Therefore, it is improper to present a married woman whose husband is alive with only the sari cloth; either a ready-made blouse or at least a blouse-piece should be given along with it. The offering of the blouse-pieces to the *Mātaṅgi* is most probably a precaution: instead of the lives of their husband, and thereby their own status of *sumaṅgalī* (auspicious one), the women try to satisfy the 'goddess' with the blouse.

269. Cf. K. Kailasapathy, *op. cit.*, p. 109

270. Cf. E. te Nijenhuis, *Indian Music, History and Structure*, Leiden/Köln, 1974, p. 54.

271. For instance, *Yāpparuṅkalakkārikai* (10-11th century) has a commentary on it by Kuṇacākarar; in it, stanzas are given as examples: in Ceyyuḷiyal 9 comm. a stanza speaks of a *mātaṅki* performing simultaneously three actions: *vāḷ vīci* 'swinging the sword', singing the praises of *Katir vēl* of the *nāṭaṉ*, and beating a *taṇṇumai* (=*mattaḷam* or *muḻavu* or *uṭukkai*). According to *Maturaikkalampakam* (17th century) of Kumārakuruparar, st. 15, a lovely young woman dances (*viḷaiyāṭum*), with two swords (*vāḷiraṇṭu*) in hands, a sword dance in the temple; she is called *mātaṅki*. Cf. Dr. M. Rajamanickam, "Matanki", in *Te. Po. Mī. Maṇivilā Malar*, Kōvai 1961, pp. 480-492.

272. Cf. Ch. III, p. 195 ff.

273. Cf. *Kalyāṇotsava* ('marriage festival') in Agamic ritual, Ch. II, p. 137.

274. Cf. Brenda E.F. Beck, *The Three Twins, The Telling of a South Indian Folk Epic*, Bloomington, 1982.

275. Cf. B.E.F. Beck, *op. cit.*, p. 130-1.

276. Cf. B.E.F. Beck, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

277. Cf. Holly Baker Reynolds, 'The Auspicious Married Woman', in *The Powers of Tamil Women*, ed. Susan S. Wadley, Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Syracuse University, Foreign and Comparative Studies/South Asian Series 6, 1980, p. 35-60, esp. p. 50ff.

278. Cf. W. Th. Elmore, *op. cit.*, p. 13, and n. 1.

279. Both types of songs are found in the manuscript of Smt. Subburatnammā, the grandmother of my informant Smt. P. Raṅganāyaki. The songs and dances given in this manuscript will be edited seperately as 'Devadasi Heritage'.

280. Cf. Ch. II, p. 154 ff.

281. Cf. Ch. II, p. 117.

282. Cf. Ch. II, p. 120.

283. Cf. Ch. II, p. 116-7.

284. Cf. *Adi Bharata Kala Manjari, Pancha Murti and Nava Sandhi Kavuthuvams*, edited by Tanjore K.P. Kittappa and K.P. Sivanandam, Madras, 1964. I was taught the *Gaṇapati Kautvam* by one of the students of Śrī K.P. Kittappa; the authenticity, however, remains uncertain since these compositions have become 'novelty items' on the theatre stage and can in no way be compared with the style of dancing that one finds among authentic temple devadasis. The report of this study of the *Gaṇapati Kautvam*, with dance—notation and photographic illustration is available with Dr. E. teNijenhuis, University of Utrecht, in the form of a paper in partial fulfillment of my M.A. degree.

285. Cf. W. Th. Elmore, *op. cit.*, p. 35-36.

286. Cf. Ch. I. p. 23 and p. 45 and n. 224.

287. Cf. *Tiyākarājarin uṛcava campiratāyak kīrttaṇaikaḷ*, by Perāciriyar Es. Irāmanātaṉ, Kalaimakal Icaik Kallūri, Ceṉṉai, (Madras), 1969. See also Ch. II, p. 133 ff.

288. Cf. *Musical Compositions of Cheyyur Chengalvaraya Sastriyar and his opera Sundaresa Vilasamu*, Vol. I, by P. Sambamoorthy, Madras, 1952.

289. Cf. Ch. II, p. 151 ff.

290. Cf. Richard Schehner, Ramlila of Ramnagar: An Introduction, in *Journal of National Centre for the Performing Arts*, Special Issue, Vol. XI Nos. 3&4, Sept. & Dec. 1982, p. 66-99.

291. Cf. also the dramaticc ontent of the festival (*utsava*) that lasts several days, M.L. Reiniche, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

292. Cf. R. Schehner, *op. cit.*, p. 97.

293. Cf. R. Schehner, *op. cit.*, p. 97.

294. Mohan Khokar, Chaitra Parva Rituals,-Chhau dances, in *Marg*, *Vol. XXXIV*, No. 3, p. 75-87, p. 76ff.

295. The cultural situation is, however, even more complex than these apparent contradictions indicate: many of the rituals of the Chaitra Parva have their origins, if not parallels, in some of the sacred observances of the tribes of the Bhuivas, Hos, Oraons, Mundaris and Santhals. Cf. also A. Eschmann in *The Cult of Jagannath and the Regional Tradition of Orissa*, New Delhi, 1978, Hinduization of Tribal Deities in Orissa: The Śākta and Śaiva Typology (p. 79-99); Prototypes of the Navakalevara Ritual and their Relation to the Jagannatha Cult, p. 265-285.

296. The importance of the *jarjara*, pole and banner was noted before in Ch. I, p. 82, n. 262.

297. There are direct parallels to be found in the village cults of Tamilnadu, cf. W. Th. Elmore, *op cit.*, p. 37 where the story teller accompanies the procession for Kati Aṅkammā towards the burial ground, dressed as a woman.

298. Cf. Mohan Kokar, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

299. There exists a striking parallel between the tasks of the devadasis belonging to a temple and serving its gods and those devadasis attached to a court and serving its king. The accompaniment of kings and highly placed persons was a matter of protection and etiquette.

300. Cf. Mohan Kokar, 'Bharata Natya in Baroda', in *Proceedings of The Seventh South Indian Natyakala Conference*, The Indian Institute of Fine Arts, Madras 1953, p. 33-4: The dancers at the court of the Maharaja of Baroda were expected to perform every Wednesday and Saturday before the Maharaja after dinner. There were no performances of this category when the Maharaja was away from India on his many tours in Western countries. Dance programmes had to be given in the Durbar on occasions of celebration and also in the presence of distinguished visitors.

301. We would like once more to stress the point that we are aware of the importance of the tradition of courtesans, whether attached to a court or operating privately, for the tradition of the devadasis. Due to lack of space and time we have chosen to concentrate our attention on those types of courtesans, known as devadasis, who were employed by a temple and who served within the structure of the ritual. For the relevant Sanskrit literature pertaining to *gaṇikās* cf. K. Vatsyayan, *Classical Indian Dance in Literature and the Arts*, Delhi, 1968.

302. The rajas of Karvetinagar in Chittoor District belonged to the Śāḷuva family. The Śāḷuva family, whose distinctive family titles were Kaṭhāri-Śāḷuva, Medinimīsaraganḍa and Dharaṇīvarāha, was founded by one Vaṅkideva, and the first rajas who are datable belong to the 14th century (1362 A.D.). They were connected with Vijayanagar's dynasty, and from among them, several usurpers were recruited of the Vijayanagar throne (e.g. Narasiṃha-Rāya, †1492 or Tammadeva, †1505). The rajas of Karvetinagar who ruled over Tiruttani, were one branch of this important Śāluva dynasty. They are attested at least from 1622-1623, when Tirumala, 'son of Śrīraṅga Rājā and the grandson of Kathāri-Śāḷuva-Mahārāja', was chieftain of the Chittoor tract. Cf. V. Rangachari, "List of Inscriptions, topographically arranged", I, Chittoor 267, 268; 376, 377 of 1911). Reference to this source by courtesy of K.V. Zvelebil.

303. Cf. the Holi festival described by McKim Mariott, 'The Feast of Love', in *Krishna, Myths, Rites and Attitudes*, ed. by Milton Singer, p. 200-213.

304. Cf. Ch. II, p. 135.

305. Personal communication from T. Sankaran.

306. The famous *vīṇā* player Vīṇā Dhanammāḷ was serving at the age of six as a *māṇikkam* in the house of a wealthy Mudaliar. The family detected her musical talent and presented her with a *vīṇā* and arranged training in music for her. Personal communication from her grandson, Śrī T. Sankaran.

307. The full text will be edited in 'Devadasi Heritage'.

308. The different degrees of artistic refinement will be discussed in Ch. II, p. 151 ff.

309. An important task was the preparation of the *tāli* of the bride. The *tāli* consists of a golden thread, a *mañcaḷ*-coloured thread, symbols in gold that indicate the caste of the marriage partners, and black-beads. The black-beads are believed to ward off evil, and were usually supplied by devadasis. To have one's *tāli* strung by an ever-lasting-auspicious female would influence one's own lasting state of auspiciousness (*sumaṅgālya*).

310. It is not surprising to note the indignation of the more traditional members of society and of the traditional *mēḷakkāraṇs*.

Chapter II

FUNCTION AND FORM OF THE DEVADASI TRADITION WITHIN THE TEMPLE RITUAL IN TAMILNADU

Introduction

Nature of South Indian Temple Worship

This chapter deals with sacred rituals as practised in the temples of South India, especially with the role of devadasi song and dance therein. The textual basis is formed by a large number of ritual manuals, called *āgamas, saṃhitās, tantras* and *paddhatis*, and their commentaries. In view of the large concentration of temples and the importance of the devadasi tradition in the Tamil-speaking area of South India, this chapter is mainly based on Sanskrit manuals, inscriptions and data provided by informants associated with temples in Tamilnadu.

For the unprepared modern Western mind the spectacle of Indian temple ritual is bewildering and seemingly impenetrable. And, indeed, Western logic can take us no further than an almost too obvious symbolism of a statue being treated as if it were human. It receives all human comforts like bath, clean clothes, food and entertainment. Although the appreciation of temple ritual varies greatly among the Indians themselves, it cannot be explained so easily from the sincere worshipper's point of view.

Before going into the details of temple ritual and its artistic content we should at least try to envisage what this world-view was and to some extent still is like. A comparison with the European Middle Ages may be helpful: the central position of the church and its teachings, the religious symbolism which pervaded almost totally human expression, the religious calendar, the festivals, the devotion, but also the fixed world—order, the feudal lord and patron, the clergy, and the high respect for philosophical speculation; all these cultural facets resemble closely traditional Hinduism. In the West this harmony was disrupted by the 'victory of rationalism' followed by the two world wars. In South India, however, this universe is still alive, although it is rapidly losing its vitality and confined more and more to the periphery of daily life.

The difference between a 'modern' man and a 'traditional' Hindu is apparently very deep and far-reaching. Only a brief attempt can be made at pointing out some of these differences.

1. A very basic difference consists in the fact that the traditional Hindu 'lives an identification' with the universe. His conception of it is not a conclusion to which he has come individually, but an identification with an existing world-order, an order that touches on his daily toilet-ablutions as

well as on the contraction and expansion of the universe. All his actions fit somewhere into the total plot.[1]

Most tangible, amidst all of it—life, death and rebirth—stands the temple; a place where this world-order is brought to life, *in actu*, is clarified, where its battles are fought, and the ultimate victory of the good is celebrated. It all happens very 'powerfully' and significantly there. In the temple, the clashing universal forces are brought under control; divine power is very efficiently present within its walls.

As suggested on the previous pages, the temple ritual studied here can be followed best from the angle of *homo ludens*. It is more than an actualisation in appearance only, a sham reality; it is also more than a symbolical actualisation: it is a mystical one. After concluding the sacred performance its beatification (here: *puṇya*) is not lost; rather it continues to shed its radiance on the ordinary world outside, a wholesome influence, working security, order and prosperity for the whole community. In short: it is "auspicious".[2]

Hinduism in its devotional, ritual forms aims to generate this invisible, beatific holiness by means of a very large, ancient and many-layered ritual and mythico-poetical symbolism. The actual dimensions of time, space and change are to be transformed gradually, either through *yoga*, through ritual, or through devotion (*bhakti*) into a higher reality of eternal truth. Temple worship highlights the several roads of transformation in its cultic philosophy in *yoga*-practices, in rituals as well as in mythology visualised in devotions and performing arts.

The question whether the average Hindu is aware of those different layers of esoteric meaning of the cult remains to be asked. Nevertheless, the (temple) ritual performance soars beyond the antithesis of wisdom and folly, truth and falsehood, good and evil, life and death. It transcends the immediate needs of life and imparts meaning to the actions, even for the unsophisticated.[3]

2. Another basic difference between 'modern' man and the 'traditional' Hindu is his concept of time. There can hardly be a greater contrast between the modern view of time which is linear and stretches along an ever rising line of progress, and the non-modern view of time which is cyclical, revolving the course of eternal, existential truths which are brought into light ever and ever again as their time comes.

By participating in one of the many festivals (*utsavas*) the devotee witnesses the archetypal evil once more ṣlain by the archetypal good. He does not expect, though, that this battle has been conclusive, and that from that moment onwards a better world-period has set in. In one month's time the forces will clash again, like the ever-repeated marriage of the god and goddess.

On a sophisticated level, Hindu religious activity is meticulously based on astronomical and astrological traditions. In fact, this interdependence would form a large study on its own. Since the present work is not concerned with temple worship assuch but mainly with its functional slot of

devadasi song and dance therein, merely an outline of the Hindu concept of time will be given.

In relation to this chapter we should imagine time as a perpetual set of concentric cycles, each cycle completing itself in its own fixed time, enclosing progressively smaller and smaller cycles. With this image in mind we move from the larger cycle of the 'Day of *Brahmā*' to the smaller cycles that are relevant to our study. Amidst these cycles stands the Hindu, as a member of his community, with all its traditions. In the very centre, within man, in the moment of enlightenment, all time-categories are transgressed.

The temple ritual operates along the axis of several cycles: in the festival rituals we cross the year, seasons, months and weeks, and in the regular, daily ritual, the day, night, *sandhis, yāmas* and hours; ultimately, in the Yogic practices, or in grace (*mokṣa/aruḷ*) obtained by devotion, eternity is experienced.

1 kalpa
1 day of Brahmā: sṛṣṭi
1 day of Brahmā = 14 manvantara
1 manvantara = 71 mahāyuga
1 mahayuga = 4 yuga
1 yuga = 432,000 samvatsara
1 samvatsara = 6 kāla
1 kāla = 2 māsa
1 māsa = 2 pakṣa
1 pakṣa = 2 vāra
1 vāra = 7 tithi
1 tithi = 3 sandhi
1 sandhi = 8 yāma
1 yāma
24 nāḍī
pralaya

Graph 2 : Hindu conception of time; one day of Brahmā.[4]

On the following pages we will discuss the ritual performed in the temple that, ultimately, aims to achieve this mystical merger as well. We will investigate the space-time coordinates that occasion the performance and that impart meaning to it, the dramatic 'plot', and the ritual performers. Thereafter we will examine more closely the function of one ritual performer in particular, the devadasi, within the structure of the ritual as well as the form in which this function is expressed.

1. *Ritual Performance*

Space

a. 'Space conceived and lived'[5]

A popular South Indian saying holds that "a place without a temple is unsuitable for human habitation". And indeed, every settlement has some *locus* of the divine presence. What matters often most is the place, a definite location where the divine is actually and effectively present. Especially in the case of indigenous, non-Brahmanic temples, we encounter the compulsory worship of gods, goddesses and demons that have made their presence felt and that demand worship. The atmosphere is, so to say, potentially charged with the divine; not only the temple is the focus-point of divine expression, *the entire settlement is charged with ritual meaning and importance*. The divine manifests itself in that place and in that mode which is suitable to those who perceive it. Thus, different categories of shrines and types of worship exist side by side within one village.

A very clear description of the natural formation of a sacred village-plan is found in the chapter "Un espace conçu et vécu ('Space conceived and lived')" of *Les dieux et les hommes* (Paris, 1979). The author shows the importance of the term *caturvedimaṅgala* ('the auspicious place of those who belong to the four *Vedas*'). This term serves to denote the bipartition of the village in a ritually pure and ritually impure part. The dividing line is formed by the river *Tāmraparṇī* and a channel that might have been dug especially for this purpose, since water is considered to have a purifying effect and to protect against defilement. The purest part of the village is formed by the four 'grand' roads around the great temple. During festival days the temple-chariot follows this quadrangle round the temple. The highest (i.e. ritually purest) castes are grouped around these roads. According to the degree of diminishing purity, occupational groups are further and further removed from this ritual centre. Across the channel live the caste-groups that share features like unclean professions, non-vegetarian diet and the worship of indigenous, non-Brahmin gods.

In this connection there is a twofold criterion for the distribution of the divine manifestations. On the one hand each caste and professional group has its own special gods, mostly an *Ammaṉ* (goddess) located in their living quarters. Other groups are reluctant to worship this deity, and they are not likely to contribute to the expenses involved in festivals (here:

Koṭai) held for a god that they do not consider 'their own'. On the other hand, divine manifestations are characterised by their locus on the compass-card (*diś-*).

An example of the validity of the first criterion can be found in the story of Nantaṉār told by Cēkkiḻār in his *Tirunāḷaip-pōvar Nāyaṉār Purāṇam* (in *Periyapurāṇam,* ca. 1135 A.D.; the story runs as follows: Nantaṉ was born as a *pulaiya* in the *cēri* (outcaste village) of Ātaṉūr. He was devoted to Śiva from his boyhood. He went to Tiruppaṅkūr temple and succeeded in having a *darśan* ('audience' or 'view'). He then decided to go to Childambaram, but about this he was rather irresolute, and since he always planned to go next day, he became known as Tirunāḷaippōvar 'The holy one who will go tomorrow'. Finally he went. However, before he could be received by Śiva and the priests, he had to bathe in a fire-pit from which he emerged unscathed with the visage of a sage: then he was taken into Śiva's sanctissimum where he disappeared in a blaze of effulgence.[6] This story was taken up by Gopalakrishna Bharati (ca. 1795-1896 or 1800/11-1896) for exposition with music (*kālakṣēpam,* lit. 'passing one's time'). His exposé was so excellent that a definite shape was given to it; thus, it became known as *Nantaṉār carittirakkīrttaṉai.* Bharati's conception of Nantaṉ is not that of a solitary devotee, but of a social being. The low people of his community express a critical and negative attitude to Nantaṉ: even if there were a god in Ambalam, like he says,

it is a Brahman god, it has no sense,
he won't protect a Pariah.[7]

When Nataṉ arrives in Chidambaram he is hindered by the Brahmans Paraya,[8]

You cannot go to Sidambaram,
you cannot even utter the word Sidambaram,
sirrah, Paraya,
leave Sidambaram alone, come back
to your miserable shut-off *cēri,*
grasp your bunches of plants and get to work,
and take your offerings to your Karuppan -hey, sirrah, Paraya!

The second criterion for the division of divine manifestation, namely their locus on the compass-card (*diś-*) is most clearly exemplified by the division of the temple-ground (see p. 117) in nine cardinal points (*nava-sandhi*), but also in the village-plan. For instance, the goddess in the North-East corner (Celliyammaṉ) is a single, ascetic goddess; this ascetic aspect seems to be characteristic for this region.[9] This goddess has a very difficult temper, she has no patience or indulgence (*poṟumai*), and she is regarded as the jealous, elder sister of all goddesses in the village; her power, though, is very great. Therefore, her temple is situated outside the village, because 'people are too impure to be in her constant company' and any irritation caused by them would have disastrous effects. The worship that is offered

to her is performed in all silence and secrecy; this in contrast to her 'younger sister' Mūppiṭāriyamman who lives south of the four cardinal roads. This goddess receives a festival worship that is very colourful. For her procession the temple chariot is used, and musicians, possessed dancers, and bow-song ensembles enliven the festival. All these entertainments are silenced when the chariot passes by the 'elder sister' for fear that she might get irritated and jealous.[10]

In this way all gods, goddesses, demons and other divine manifestations have their own 'power-fields' and their own proper modes of worship. It is, however, important to note that the continuum of Hinduisation that was discussed before (cf. p. 49) is responsible for a great deal of mutual contact and influence. This becomes especially clear in the festival mode of Agamic worship (*utsava*) that transgresses the protected space allotted to its daily rituals. The festival procession touches the four grand roads around the temple, and sometimes even the entire village, including all its resident gods, goddesses, demons and devils. The inclusion of these gods or the protection of the deities of the temple against them was a natural result.

b. The temple

A South Indian temple, called *kṣetra* (Skt. 'sacred spot'), *devasthāna, devālaya* (Skt. 'residence of a god'), *kōṭṭam* (Ta.< Skt. 'place'), *kōyil, kōvil* (Ta. 'house of the king'), *kuṭi* (Ta. 'dwelling') can belong, roughly speaking, to the following categories:

1. indigenous temple
2. Agamic temple
3. royal temple
4. pilgrimage temple[11]

The indigenous temple belongs to gods that are locally bound and that are worshipped according to non-Brahmanic rites. As this type of worship has been discussed previously, we will turn our attention to the latter three types of temples.

The Agamic temple and the royal temple are very close in outlook, ritual and type of worshippers. The main difference between the two is that the latter houses a god who is considered the tutelary deity of the royal house; his realm extends to the entire kingdom. The Agamic and royal temples follow the ritual code laid down in the Sanskrit Agamas. This type of ritual must be precise and uninterrupted, unlike the ritual in the indigenous temple which is performed mostly in times of distress.

The last category, the pilgrimage temple, seems to be an outspoken fusion of both the Agamic and the indigenous temple. Not seldom is such a pilgrimage centre based on a 'very powerful' indigenous cultic spot, overlaid with a more prestigious Agamic layer. Up to recent times, Brahmins and Tamil Sudras have performed side by side worship in these temples. They

function for all types of aims: propitiation and help, spiritual progress and prestige, as well as devotion and grace.

c. Temple ground and object of ritual performance

The temple-ground, the stage proper for the Agamic performance, is, as in the case of the plan of the village, a very composite phenomenon which lends itself to several interpretations. On the following pages we will briefly discuss four interpretations: 1. derivation from the Vedic sacrificial ground 2. homology between the temple and the human body, 3. homology between the temple and the body of the god-king, and 4. the temple-ground as a composite field of divine energy of various nature.

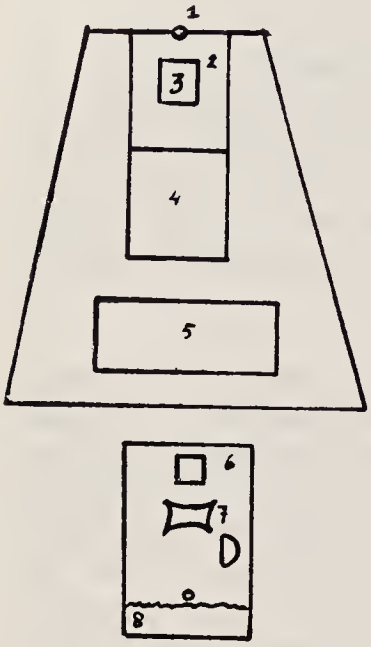
1. Vedic symbolism in the temple-ground

"To all intents and purposes, Vedic ritualism, at any rate in its original form, is extinct today." Some Vedic scholars believe that the Agamic ritual and the Vedic ritual share only the movement of worship from East to West.[12] Others see the 'place of many of the Vedic forms taken up by Agamic substitutes. While using Vedic *mantras* or *ṛcas* (hymns), the participants also use Agamic formulae, including *bījākṣaras*, press into service yogic measures, such as *prāṇāyāma*, and base the whole process on Upaniṣadic philosophy. Thus, what one gets in modern Hindu rituals is a composite form consisting of portions of Vedic ritualism, yogic measures, and Vedanta philosophy. Even the plan for the temple is derived from that of the *yāgaśālā* (hall for Vedic sacrifice), as will be evident from the comparison given on page 94[13].

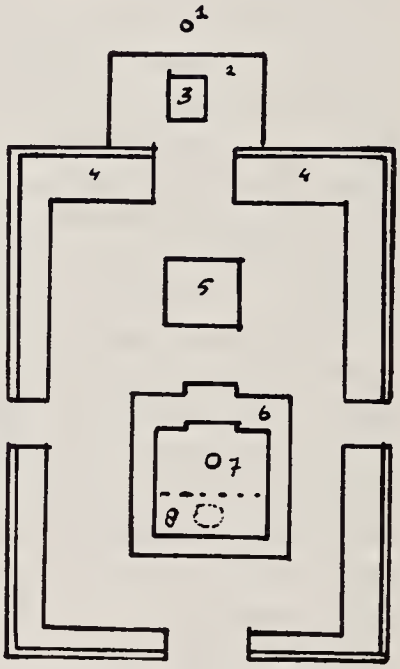
Ravi Varma identifies the idol in the Agamic temple with the Vedic oblation fire, and the *dhvajastambha* with the *yūpa* of a Vedic sacrificial ground; it represents, a strong well-established, pan-Indian tradition. Speculation about it goes back to Vedic literature. On the one hand, the *dhvajastambha* is interpreted as the *axis mundi* which is found in the cosmic waters below the earth and which reaches up to the sun at its zenith, on the other hand it is worshipped as the Indra-pillar and it is even equated with this god.[14] The next step in the identification of the *axis mundi* with the *dhvajastambha* which in its turn represents the victorious Indra, assuring thus by its presence the sustenance of moral law and justice, of rain and fertility, is according to J.C. Heesterman the equation of the living king with Indra.[15] In a ritual enactment of Indra's victory over the demon, the king is supposed to be merged with Indra. In the royal consecration ceremony (*rājasūya*), at the climax of the unaction ceremony, the king is made to stand on his throne with his arms raised over his head in explicit imitation of the cosmic pillar that was erected after slaying the demon.

This symbolism of the *dhvajastambha* explains the elaborate rites connected with the starting of the festival worship (*utsava*) that center around the flag-staff and flag. A connection with the *talaikkōl* found in the *Cilappatikāram* and the *jarjara* that was discussed before and that plays an

important role in a theatrical performance according to Bharata's *Nāṭya-śāstra* (ca. 200 A.D.) is highly probable.[16]



3. *yāgaśālā*
1. *yūpa*
2. *uttaravedi*
3. *daśapada*
4. *havirdāna*
5. *sadas*
6. *Agnihotraśālā*
7. main *vedi*
8. *patnīśālā*



4. Agamic temple
1. *dhvajastambha* (flagstaff)
2. *baligṛha*
3. *balipīṭha*
4. food-preparation
5. *maṇḍapa*
6. *garbhagṛha* (sanctumsanctorum)
7. idol
8. the idol of the Sakti of the main idol (7.)

note: same numbers denote equivalent factors

Graph 3 *and* 4: comparison of *yāgaśālā* and temple

2. Homology between the human body and the temple on the basis of Yogic doctrines.

This is certainly not the place to give a systematic exposé on Yogic doctrines. However, it is necessary to offer an abbreviated synopsis on Tantric oriented Haṭha Yoga in order to be able to follow the homology between the temple and the human body.[17]

"There are three principal levels of human constitution which are referred to in the systems of Yoga: (a) the *spiritual* level, constituted in man by the pure Consciousness itself, which, through Illusion (*māyā*), individualized in each of us, but, in fact, is identical with the Highest Being and with the Universal Life. (b) This consciousness, which is *energy,* is expressed in the normal man in the next, *psychological* level with its two familiar subdivisions, the *affective* and the *intellectual.* (c) Finally, there is the *physiological* level.

Yoga has thus a triadic conception of functional levels in man. Realization means, in short, to do away with the illusion that Consciousness itself is identical with intellectual and/or affective activity; and the technique to arrive at the realization is, briefly, to suppress the fluctuations of mental activity."

Why is Haṭha Yoga important for our study? "Because the Tantric realization, apart from requiring practice (*abhyāsa*, Ta. *appiyācam*), requires a seat of praxis: *the body*. The result of the practice should be the reversal of the process of phenomenalization; and the body must be the arena of this reversal. Only through the body bliss is manifested, since only through body phenomenalization is caused." Here we can substitute, for our purpose, for the word body, "body and temple".

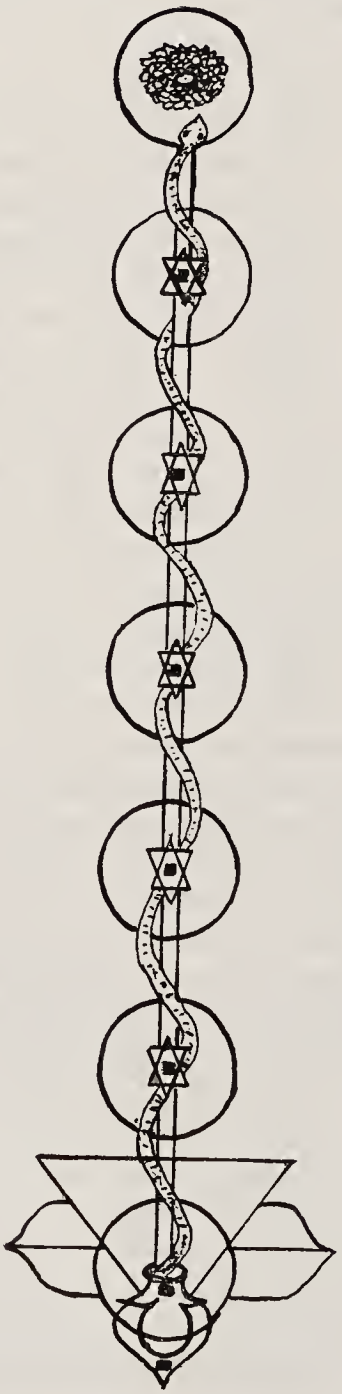
"The hierarchic and subtile physiology of Haṭha Yoga presupposes a sublime, subtle anatomy. It is extremely important to remember that, according to Yoga, there is a threefold human structure: the self, the 'subtle' body, and the 'gross' body. The subtle body plays the role of a connection between the gross physical body and the spirit. There are *correspondences* between the subtle and the physical body, but not identity." Here, too, we may read for body, 'temple' or 'image' (*mūrti*). The Agamas deal with this *correspondence* between the subtle and the physical body of the god and the offerings given to him, in fact of the entire performance of worship, in great detail and length. The Yogic symbolism of the temple-ground, the stage proper, can be explained and illustrated as follows: "In addition, and apart from, the gross physical body directly accessible to our senses, with its vertebral column and spinal cord [SKS : the gross physical temple directly accessible to our senses with its glance-line, i.e. *vīkṣana*, and several shrines]...., there exists, according to Yoga, *another subtle body* with its own nerves and arteries etc. When a yogin, for instance, meditates on a particular vortex of psychic energy, he does *not* meditate on an anatomic localization in his physical body which would correspond to a subtle centre (*cakra*), but on that subtle centre itself." In this way, too, according to Yogic doctrine, does the worshipper, visiting the different shrines on a temple-ground, meditate on and worship the subtle force of the pertinent shrine. Usually a temple visit is formed by a concatenation of 'paying respects' or 'having *darśan*' at several shrines. The visitors hold negligence towards a number of divine manifestations as 'dangerous'. Why? This, too, can be explained from a Yogic point of view.

"The most important component of the 'subtle' body, for the purpose of Yoga techniques, are the *nāḍis* ('conduits') and the *cakras* ('centres').

The *nāḍis* ('conduits', 'vessels', 'nerves') are channels of *prāṇic* energy. They form an invisible network of conduits of vital forces. Vital energy, *prāṇa*, which is present in and activating all which lives, circulates in form of 'breaths' through the *nāḍis*. Where many such 'subtle' conduits meet, a centre or *cakra* exists. (....) The *cakras* or centres are vortices of psychic energy. (....) There are seven important *cakras* (discs', 'wheels', 'centres')

which correspond, in the physical body, to the sympathetic plexuses and the *sutura frontalis*. They are also called 'lotuses' because they are 'composed' of constantly whirling streams of energy which radiate outwards in 'petal-like' emanations". The object of our study forces us to restrict ourself to a mere enumeration of the seven *cakras*. The doctrine of the seven *cakras* is important because all Yoga techniques, and especially the Tantric varieties, ultimately aim at the 'opening' of the Kuṇḍalinī the master energy, and her passage through the *cakras*.[18]

Below we will see how these seven *cakras* are visualised in the temple-



Graph 5: The ascent of *kuṇḍalinī śakti* through the Yogic *cakras*-and-temple shrines[19]

ground and with which gods they are associated. Once aroused, the Kuṇḍalinī moves through the *cakras*; similarly, the worshipper goes through this process when he goes through a regular temple-visit. The homology works both ways: the worshipper or rather the *yogin,* may also visualize the temple-ground and the sacred activities performed there, in his own body. This is one of the reasons why people with less devotional temperaments prefer to abstain from temple-visits.

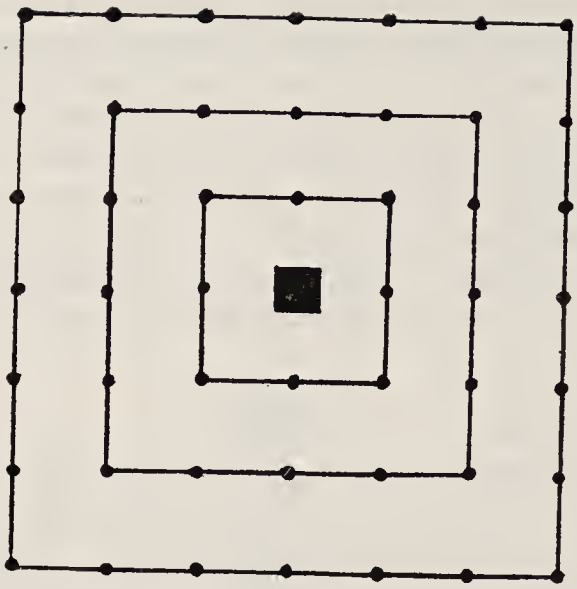
The twofold homology of the body with the temple transforms the body into a pantheon as well as a microcosm containing the genesis and destruction of the universe.[20]

3. *Vāstupuruṣamaṇḍala*

The third interpretation visualises the temple-ground as the reclining body of the god. Facing the East this anthropomorphic body is awoken to rise in the morning and is put to sleep every night. "*Puruṣa* is the universal Essence, the principle of all things, the Prime Person whence all originates. *Vāstu* is the site; in it, *vāstu,* bodily existence, abides and from it *vāstu* derives its name. In bodily existence, *Puruṣa*, the Essence, becomes Form. The temple building is the substantial, and the 'plan' (*maṇḍala*) is the ritual diagrammatic form of the *Puruṣa. Puruṣa* himself has no substance. He gives it his impress. The substance is of wood, brick or stone in the temple. (....) The *Vāstupuruṣamaṇḍala* is a *yantra.* Like the *yantra*—a geometrical contrivance by which any aspect of the Supreme Principle may be bound to any spot for the purpose of worship—the *vāstupuruṣamaṇḍala* is an artifice in which the ground (*bhūmi*) is converted into the extent of the manifested universe."[21] The *vāstupuruṣamaṇḍala* is conceived of as a square *maṇḍala* of the earth. In it, we encounter, too, the concentric principle discussed previously in connection with the conception of time.[22] Around the central, cardinal deity (Brahmā) are grouped eight gods, surrounded by a square formed by sixteen men, and, finally, by twenty-four ghosts (*piśācas*). All divine powers are honoured at an individual *sandhi* (ritual spot). Together the three concentric 'circuits' of *sandhis* form the triple Worlds of Gods, Men and Demons.

This ritual, diagrammatic thinking is of crucial importance for the 'plot' and the 'choreography' of ritual worship, whether in daily or in festival performance. Great ritual care is taken to keep all the divine forces 'embedded' in the temple-area peaceful and content. In this task the devadasis played an important role (see further p. 117).

It is not clear to what extent the less sophisticated devotees are aware of this complex ritual, diagrammatic thinking. Their interpretation of the *vāstupuruṣa* resembles more the image of a very 'tangibly' present god who manifests himself as a splendorous king. Like a royal lord, the Divine Lord holds a court, receives visitors, listens to their requests, is awoken with the auspicious sounds of music, is bathed, dressed and amused, and, what is more important: he is emotionally involved in his devotees. He gives both



Graph 6: *Vāstupuruṣamaṇḍala*

bhukti (earthly enjoyments) and *mukti* (release from the chain of necessary rebirths) through his grace (*aruḷ*). He may choose to do so according to his 'whims and liking', no amount of ritual can force him. What matters, though, is the amount of love (*bhakti*) for one's chosen god and his loving response. Among the Tamil devotional singer-saints several examples of fortunate men are known who behaved during their lifetime in a manner that was markedly disrespectful towards the ritual rules of conduct.[23] It was entirely god's liking that he bestowed his grace on them.

This attitude towards temple-worship and the mental image of the Divine enshrined in the temple is fundamentally different from the previous interpretations of the temple-ground and its gods. Although it combines elements of propitiation and ritual control, the main importance is given to devotion (*bhakti*).

4. *Divine symbiosis*

The last interpretation dealt with here is rather a cultural-anthropological view of the temple-ground than a view which could be ascribed to any Indian authority. It shows the strong syncretistic tendency of Hinduism to include all expressions of 'divine power' in ritual attendance. One of the reasons for the many explanations given to Hindu temple-ritual may be the fact that that cultural-religious syncretism has absorbed traditions of very divergent nature; divergent in all respects: time, locus and social stratum. Only by keeping this confusing, ever-expanding process in mind we will we saved from utter desperation in trying to unravel cultural phenomena presented to us. In many cases we have to content ourselves by mere recording and analysis of a phenomenon without being able to fit it into one single, conclusive structure.

Analysing the divine forces present within the walls of the Agamic temple, we see that a great variety of cults has found shelter there. In fact, one is reminded of the picture given by M.L. Reiniche of the South Indian village Mel Ceval and its different shrines.[24] With the exception of non-vegetarian, liquor consuming gods and goddesses who can be found only outside the walls of an Agamic shrine, practically all other divine manifestations are represented on the temple-ground. On the one hand, we find vegetative forces like the *sthalavṛkṣa* (local tree) or the *puṟṟu* (ant-hill) and, on the other hand, astrology is represented, too, by the Navagraha idols (Nine Planets).

The multivalence of the general Agamic temple-ground is reflected as well in the repertoire of the devadasis as it was their task to propitiate several of these divine forces. An example of this correlation is found in Graph 19 depicting the plan of the Tiruvarur temple.

Object of ritual performance

The four categories of temples are reflected as well in their divine representations (*mūrti*). Here, we will discuss only the object of the ritual performance held in the Agamic, royal and pilgrimage temples.

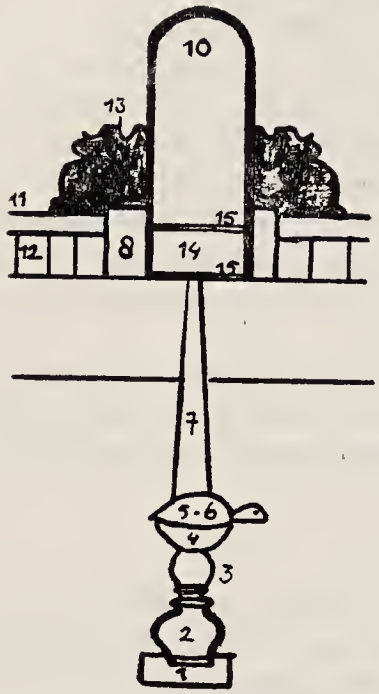
The main image (*mūrti, vigraha*) may be abstract or anthropomorphic and is installed in the *mūlasthāna* (primal station) also called *garbhagṛha* (womb-house). This image is immovably fixed in the cella of the central shrine and can be compared to a king living in the safety of his well-guarded stronghold. In anthropomorphic form the god is usually represented as the 'divine pair' (Śiva-Śakti or Hari-Devī); sometimes the god has two wives or, we find a 'divine family': Sa-Umā-Skanda, i.e., Śiva accompanied by his wife Umā and their son Skanda (i.e., Murukaṉ'). In Śaivite temples the an-iconic representation of the divine is formed by the composite 'abstract' of the *liṅga* (commonly understood as the phallic symbol of Śiva) in the *yoni-pīṭha* (understood as the female sexual organ, forming the pedestal), thus uniting the male and female principle. These two parts are visible to the worshippers; however, under the *liṅga-yoni* an entire structure is hidden from the public eye (cf. Graph 7, note especially the position of the *kumbha* or pot).[25]

Not far from the main shrine is situated the processional image (*utsava-vigraha*) which is always in anthropomorphic shape.

Time

In ritual, time, too, is charged with supra-natural meaning. Man does not straightforwardly live his *own* time, his *own* day or his *own* year, he lives a 'larger, ever repeated, true' time. In ritual, ordinary time is transformed into eternal time; but also, eternal time is translated into understandable, ordinary time through ritual. The ritual process works both ways.

Broadly speaking we may distinguish two major categories of ritual worship: daily worship and festival worship. Both are characterised by a meticulous division of the time-cycle within which the ritual evolves. With

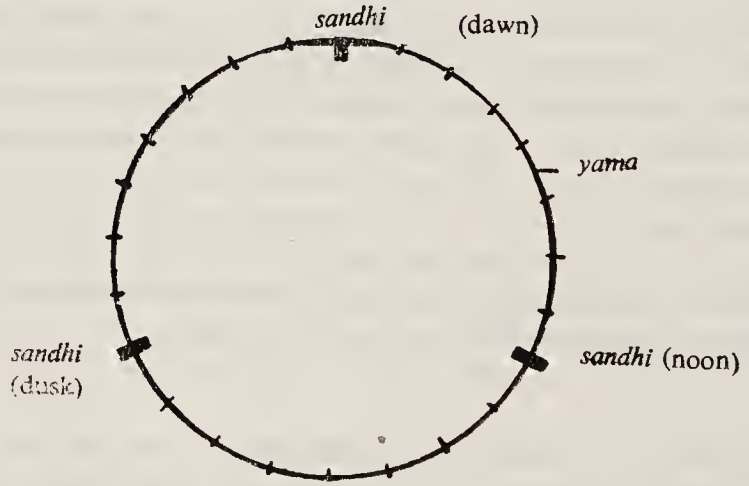


1. *ādhāraśilā*: support-stone
2. *nidhikumbha*: deposit-por
3. *padma*: lotus-bud
4. *kūrma*: tortoise
5. silver lotus and tortoise
6. golden lotus and tortoise
7. *yoganālt*: *yoga*-tube
8. *napuṃsakaśilā*: hermaphrodite stone
9. *pīṭha*: altar (yoni)
10. *vigraha*: idol (*liṅga*)
11. floor of *garbhagṛha*
12. *iṣṭakācayana*: piling up of bricks
13. *nāla*: ridge for offering-fluid
14. *Brahmābhāga*
15. *yantra*: ritual diagram

Graph 7: *liṅga-yoni* as central idol

the concentric time-cycles shown in Graph 2 in mind, we will investigate the time-cycles of *tithi* (day) and of *saṃvatsara* (year).

a. Daily ritual (*nityārcanā*)



Graph 8: day-cycle

According to the *Ajitāgama* Ch. XX *arcanāvidhi* 11.18 the number of *arcanās* (ritual worship) is left to the discretion of the temple. However, the text supplies the following evaluation based on the frequency of ritual performance per day:

evaluation	performance of *arcanā*	total
best of best	4 during daytime	
	4 during evening-night	8
middle of best	4 during daytime	
	3 during evening-night	7
lower of best	4 during daytime	
	2 during evening	6
best of middle	at the 3 *sandhis*	
	at second *yāma* of night	4
middle of middle	at 3 *sandhis*	3
lower of middle	at 2 *sandhis* (dawn and noon)	2
best of lower	at 2 *sandhis* (down and dusk)	2
middle of lower	1 *arcanā*	1
lower of lower	no *liṅga* seen	

The general practice of ritual worship in the temples in Tamilnadu ranges from best of middle (4 *arcanās*) to lower of best (6 *arcanās*) during ordinary days; on festival days, however, the best of best (8 *arcanās*) may be followed.

b. Festival ritual (naimittikārcanā)

Naimittikārcanā designates ritual which is to be performed occasionally, lit. 'due to a cause'. More generally it is known as the festival mode of worship and is characterised by one or more processions (*utsava*). The causes due to which festivals are to be performed are manifold and motivated by several cultural layers and imperatives.

While discussing festival ritual, first, its 'setting' in time should be investigated. Time, as noted before, is charged with mythico-religious meaning as well as with astrological reality. On the basis of these two cultural imperatives a system of successive festivals marks the progress of the year-cycle. In order to follow this chain of festivals a clear picture of the structure of the year is indispensable.

The system for dividing the year comprises the following categories: *kāla* (season), *māsa* (month), *pakṣa* (half-month: full-moon and half-moon marking the beginning of these two units, that are each formed by fifteen days) and *vāra* (week); the day-cycle has been discussed above. In the following systematic account of the year-cycle four different nomenclatures have been employed: the Sanskrit nomenclature based on the lunar system, its Tamil equivalents, and the Sanskrit nomenclature indicating the solar system, with its Western equivalents. Agamic literature generally follows the lunar Sanskrit system while the informants employed mostly the Tamil names.

Saṃvatsara-year

Kāla season	*Māsa* (Skt.) lunar month	*Mācam* (Ta.) lunar month	Western months	Solar (Skt.) month
Vasanta	*Caitra*	*Cittirai*	April-May	*Meṣa*
	Vaiśākha	*Vaikāci*	May-June	*Vṛṣabha*
Grīṣma	*Jyaiṣṭha*	*Āṉi*	June-July	*Mithuna*
	Aṣāḍha	*Āṭi*	July-August	*Karkaṭa*
Varṣa	*Śrāvaṇa*	*Āvaṇi*	August-Sept.	*Siṃha*
	Bhadrapadā	*Puraṭṭāci*	Sept.-Oct.	*Kanyā*
Śarad	(*Prauṣṭha*)			
	Āśvina (*Aśvayuga*)	*Aippaci*	Oct.-Nov.	*Tulā*
Hemanta	*Kārttika*	*Kārttikai*	Nov.-Dec.	*Vṛścika*
	Mārgaśīrṣa	*Mārkaḻi*	Dec.-Jan.	*Dhanus*
	Pauṣa	*Tai*	Jan. - Feb.	*Makara*
Śiśira	*Māgha*	*Māci*	Feb. - March	*Kumbha*
	Phālguna	*Paṅkuṉi*	March-April	*Mīna*

Māsa-month

Kṛṣṇa pakṣa - 15 *tithi* (first day : *pūrṇimāvāsya*)
Śukla pakṣa - 15 *tithi* (first day : *āmā/bahulāvāsya*)

Vāra-week

	Sanskrit	Tamil	Western
1.	*Ravivāra*	*Ñayiṟṟukiḻamai*	Sunday
2.	*Somavāra*	*Tiṅkaṭkiḻamai*	Monday
3.	*Maṅgalavāra*	*Cevvāykkiḻamai*	Tuesday
4.	*Budhavāra*	*Putaṟikiḻamai*	Wednesday
5.	*Bṛhaspativāra/Guruvāra*	*Vyāḻakiḻamai*	Thursday
6.	*Śukravāra*	*Veḷḷikiḻamai*	Friday
7.	*Śanivāra*	*Caṉikiḻamai*	Saturday

Meaning of ritual time

1. *The cycle of the year*

To the believing Hindu, time is an ever-revolving process marked by archetypal events which constitute the order (*dharma*) of the cosmos, the earth and human society. Both, the dark and evil forces of nature and the procreative, harmonising powers are eternal, cosmic forces. The balancing of these two and the ever-renewed victory of good over evil, of life over death and of harvest of calamity is one of the major messages and truths which a festival intends to convey.

According to South Indian time notions, the year is, broadly speaking,

divided into two halves: one 'auspicious' (*uttarāyaṇa* or northern course) and one 'dangerous' half (*dakṣiṇāyaṇa* or southern course).

(i) The *dakṣiṇāyaṇa* period covers the months of *Āṭi* till the end of *Mārkaḻi*. In this half of the year the struggle between the gods (*devas*) and the antigods (*asuras*) takes place. A critical confrontation of good and evil continues till the end of the month of *Mārkaḻi*. Finally, the total of the remaining dark forces are annihilated by Śiva Naṭarāja who destroys all impurities dancing on the back of the Asura. This event takes place when the star of Ārudra (*Alpha Orionis*) appears; it is supposed to resemble burning fire transforming all evil and impurities into gold. The festival named after this star, i.e., *Ārudra darśana*, completes the dark period.

(ii) The period of *uttarāyaṇa* depicts god descending to this earth to establish his harmonious reign. He shows himself in divine splendor to his devotees, installed on a huge chariot (*ratha, tēr*) drawn through the streets of the town. This 'leisurely' royal display is in sharp contrast to the battles which had to be fought in the previous half year.[26]

This level of mythical thinking has a counterpart in the village-cults connected with fertility and rites performed by women at home. The opportunity of conducting a marriage is strongly influenced by the 'auspiciousness' or 'inauspiciousness' of the month. Even in the matter of dying, one is advised to pass away during the *uttarāyaṇa* period.

2. *The cycle of the festival performance*

The *utsava,* as a diagnostic feature for festival worship (*naimittikārcanā*), has a dual structure: (i) the precise Agamic, ritual structure; and (ii) the structured, mythico-poetical filler. The dramatic content of a festival represents to devotees not merely symbolised divine activity; it is synonymous with the divine forces and cosmic events.

The duration of a *mahotsava* ('great festival') can be from a few to twenty-eight days. A *mahotsava* contains a number of smaller, topical *utsavas* that highlight a particular facet of the god's mythology. In the course of the *mahotsava* several 'concentric' stories are told, each depicting an individual time-cycle: the myths that are enacted through the festival ritual relate both the actual mythical event and the cosmic reality that underlies it. Not unlike the plan of the *vāstupuruṣamaṇḍala* that contains the world of gods, men and demons, the *utsava* contains cosmic, divine and human time. A clear example of these different layers in time and dramatic content is given by M.L. Reiniche in the form of a *utsava* model.[27]

mythical event	*ritual event*
The *asuras* have conquered the worlds (situation foreboding final destruction), but they keep to the code of order (*dharma*)	First four days of the *utsava.* Image of the world according to *dharma:* rule of royal couple representing *dharmic hierarchy.*

The *asuras* are initiated by a ruse of Vishnu in Jainism: *adharma* (chaos) results.	Day V: god and goddess quarrel.
	Day VI: Jainas impaled, i.e., victory of *bhakti*.
Brahma and Vishnu get together and request Śiva to kill the *asuras*.	Day VII-VIII: Śiva appears in the form of Naṭarāja, then as Kaṅkalanātha (beyond pure and impure), hereafter as Subrahmaṇya going for a hunt (*mṛgayātra*).
Viśvakarman is constructing the temple-car (*ratha*).	Cult for the *pēys* who guard the *ratha* performed by the *ācāryas* who have constructed the car.
Śiva on his *ratha*, surrounded by his devotees, burns Tripura (three cities of *asuras*), i.e. destruction of evil, protection of good.	Day IX: circumambulation on *ratha*, surrounded by devotees.
Gods return to their quarters.	Silent procession of the gods.
	Day X: Bath of the gods in river; procession of god and goddess.
	Extinction of festival without witness.

Drama

1. *Textual basis*

The Agamic cult is based on a triple literary source: the *vedas*, the *āgamas* and *upāgamas*, and the corpus of Tamil *bhakti* literature.[28]

Agamas are also called *tantras*, *saṃhitās* and *paddhatis*, and can be dated from the 10th century onwards. They contain, however, much older material and very divergent cultural practices. On the one hand, they are called 'the essence of the Vedas' and, indeed, they do contain a number of Vedic *mantras*, on the other hand, they claim to be 'superior to the Vedas'.

Although separate, Śaiva, Vaishṇava and Śākta Agamas all share a basic outline. The main division is into four portions (*pādas*); the *jñāna*-or *vidyāpāda*, the doctrinal section, followed by sophisticated worshippers; the *yogapāda*, which comprises Yoga techniques pertaining to the ritual; the *kriyāpāda*, i.e., the actual description of the ritual program; this section is mainly meant for temple-priests, but is followed—to some extent—by the private worshipper at home; and finally, the *caryāpāda*, giving the rules and directions concerning the ritual purification of the worshipper and of the officiating priest. An important supplementary authority is formed by the body of commentaries.

For the present work both Vaishṇava and Śaiva Agamas have been studied. The majority of the texts that were consulted, belong, though, to the Śaiva tradition.[29] Therefore this chapter will be based mainly on this tradition in both its literary and oral expressions.[30]

Apart from these ritual texts in Sanskrit, an entirely different tradition is part of the South Indian Agamic cult: the large collection of Tamil devo-

tional poetry and local *purāṇas* ('Stories of Olden Times'). The recitation of the Draviḍa Veda is prescribed by the Agamas.[31] In practice this means the recitation of the devotional hymns from the *Nālāyiratīvyaprapantam, Tēvāram, Tiruppukaḻ* or even quite obscure Tamil works that are referred to as *Kaṭṭiyam* or as 'local' *Tēvāram*. The repertoire of the devadasis contains not only a number of songs in Tamil but also in Telugu.

One is often under the impression that the *structure* of the ritual is purely Agamic but that the *filler* is mostly Puranic and devotional. For instance, the ritual uniting of Śiva and Śakti represents both the uniting of the male and female principle, and the offer of a pleasant night-rest to the divine pair, seated on a swing, gently rocked to sleep, listening to a lullaby sung by devadasis and enjoying a 'night-snack'.

2. *Types of worship; motivation and evaluation*

According to the *Kriyāpāda*, worship is divided into personal worship (*ātmārtha pūjā*) and worship for the benefit of others (*parārtha pūjā*). Each *pūjā* begins with five purificatory rites called *pañcaśuddhi*. The entire process of worship involves both a psychological attunement and physical 'transformation' of the worshipper towards the divine reality of a *pūjā*.

Apart from the difference in motivation there are three types of ritual structure: *nityakarman* or obligatory, daily rites; *naimittikakarman* or occasional, festival rites; and *kāmyakarman* or optional rites. It is important to note that the *nityakarman* must be performed every day; it ensures and controls the divine presence as a benevolent force.

The evaluation of these three types of ritual is traditionally as *sāttvika* (purely spiritual) for *nityapūjā*, *rājasa* (passionate) for *naimittikapūjā*, and *tāmasa* (gross) for *kāmyapūjā*. '*Nitya-pūjā* is a manifestation of the worshipper's devotion to his *iṣṭadevatā* ('chosen, favourite god') and is performed without any ulterior motive. The deity, whose presence is a living fact for the worshipper, must be treated in the only realistic way he spontaneously thinks of. This spontaneity is somewhat lacking in *naimittikapūjā*. The worsnipper is more self-conscious while performing it and, besides, other people are often present. This elaborate form of *pūjā* entails much more dynamism, and that inevitably reduces the performer's tranquility, which is so vital for awareness of his identity with the deity. Therefore *naimittikapūjā* is described as *rājasa*-a mixture of purity and impurity. *Kāmyapūjā*, on the other hand, is frankly classified as obviously impure (*tāmasa*) since it is invariably performed with finite earthly motivation.'[32]

The *Kumāratantra* adds to this evaluation that, during the festival, the morning rites represent the spiritual bend of mind of the Brahmins, the brilliant noon-*pūjā* portrays the splendour of the king, and the evening worship brings out the gross, sensuous leanings of the Sudras.[33]

3. *Structure of daily and festival worship*

(*a*) *Nityārcanā* (*nityapūjā, nityakarman*)—*daily worship*

The program of daily worship consists of a number of identical repeated rituals and of rituals that are specific for the hour of the day. The ritual structure is called *arcanā* and comprises three parts:

1. preparatory rites
2. rites proper
3. secondary rites

The rites proper are formed by the following succession of rituals: preparation of the throne; inthronisation and incorporation; bestowal of 'members'; homage with water and flowers; ablution; royal court; incense and light; offering of food; prayers. This type of worship is classified as *saparivāra* ('with following'), based on the notion that the deity in the temple is treated like a king in his court; therefore royal homage is given to him. The first homage (*upacāra*) of the long list of rituals is the preparation of the 'throne' or 'seat' for the divine personage. After that he is invoked. Although god, ultimately, is pure spirit, it is necessary for the benefit of the devotees to provide him with a body, a shape (*mūrti, vidyādeha*). Next, 'members' are bestowed on the deity; this means that it is made recognisable as an individual god characterised by his attributes and special features (*lakṣaṇas*). Once the deity is visible and recognisable homage is paid to it by pouring water on its feet, lips and head, and the offering of flowers. An usually elaborate part of worship follows: the ablutions (*abhiṣeka*) with several liquids, powders or more solid mixtures (*ghī*, milk, yoghurt, sandal, holy ashes and fruit-mixture). After these ablutions the icon is dressed, adorned with jewels, and offerings of incense and light conclude the *abhiṣeka*.

These homages are considered to be very 'tiresome', therefore the god is now given time to enjoy himself while relaxing in his established court. A circle of courtiers is brought to him and music and dance are performed. Food is offered and a number of enjoyable services is done to the divine king who is imagined to be resting on his throne in a pleasant, peaceful mood, ready to receive prayers (*japa*).

When the *arcanā* has been concluded, *prasāda* (lit. 'graciousness') is distributed among the devotees who have witnessed the ritual. The *prasāda* is considered to be the 'left-overs' from the meal consumed by god, who is thought to have enjoyed the essence of everything offered to him; the gross food-stuffs are therefore 'left-overs' touched by his divinity.[34]

After successful conclusion of these rites a small procession (*nityotsava*) may follow. The deity who is fully content and peaceful is circumambulated by the worshippers, thereby 'enclosing' his benevolence.[35]

The *abhiṣeka* (ablution) rites are the central portion of each *arcanā*; however, a great deal of variation throughout a single day is achieved by the different *upacāras* offered at different ritual moments. Generally, the ritual day includes:[36]

4.00 A.M.	— *Tirupaḷḷiyeḻucci*	— 'rising up from the sacred couch';
6.00-7.00 A.M.	— *Viḻāpūjā*	— 'unfolding *pūjā*';
7.00 - 8.00 A.M.	— *Kālaicanti*	— 'morning *sandhi*', *pūjā* (with *abhiṣeka* and procession);
9.00 A.M.	— *Ciṟukālaicanti*	— 'small morning *sandhi*';
11.00 A.M. - 12.00 noon	— *Uccikālam*	— *pūjā* of 'zenith-time', *abhiṣeka* and procession;
16.00-17.00 P.M.	— *Cāyaraṭcai*	— 'dusk' *pūjā*, most elaborate with *abhiṣeka*, pomp and procession;
20.00-21.00 P.M.	— *Arttacāmam*	— 'half-*yāma*' evening *pūjā* offering of food;
20.00-21.00 P.M.	— *Paḷḷiyaṟai cēvai*	— Putting god and goddess to sleep in the temple-bedroom.

(*b*) *Naimittikārcanā—festival worship*

The festival ritual is characterised by a grand procession of the god and goddess outside the temple (*utsava*, *mahotsava* or *brahmotsava*). The occasions for festival worship are manifold and differ in degree of elaboration and duration. However long or elaborate, all *utsavas* follows a basic structure. This structure is examplified by the *mahotsava* that is described in *Kumāratantra* Ch. XII (*Skandotsavavidhi*) and which we will outline here as an *utsava*-model.

According to the *Kumāratantra*[37] an *utsava* is composed out of three "strands": *sṛṣṭi* ('surging'), *sthiti* ('consolidation') and *saṃjaha* ('withdrawal'). There exist three categories of *utsava:* the *māsotsava* ('monthly festival'), *mahotsava* ('great festival') and *bhaktotsava* ('festival out of devotion'). The *Śrīpraśnasaṃhitā* prefers another classification: the *nityotsava* (daily festival), the *naimittikotsava* (festival held at special occasions) and the *kāmyotsava* (festival according to wish).[38] The last three are evaluated as *sāttvika* (spritual), *rājasa* (passionate) and *tāmasa* (gross) respectively.

A further distinction is made in the duration of the festival. *Kumāratantra* lists festivals that last 12, 9, 7, 6, 3 or 1 day. Compared to other sources and to contemporaneous practices this list cannot be considered a normative rule. Much depends on the wealth and popularity of the temple, or the ritual occasion. Although no month should pass without an *utsava,* it is clear that the degree of elaboration and grandeur differs from festival to festival and from month to month. Several festivals have a definite character of their own, sometimes due to the deity who is feasted, sometimes due to the mythological content of the performance. At other occasions, the constituent smaller *utsavas* which form together a *mahotsava,* become of individual importance. They emerge from the total festival structure as its most important and characteristic part, and give the entire festival their name. This is the case of the *rathotsava* (car-festival) or *teppot-*

sava (float-festival). These *utsavas* were, originally, constituent parts, but form the characteristic event at a certain time in the year.

Apart from the list of occasions for celebrating an *utsava* given on the previous pages, an *utsava* should be performed on the birthday of the king, at the *ṛkṣās* (seven stars), at the occasion of *rājābhiṣeka* (unction of the king), on the birthday of the village, on the death of the king, and to celebrate the king's victory in battle.[39]

Utsava model

Kumāratantra Ch. XXX, 25-9, mentions 16 essential steps marking the entire *utsava* performance. These steps may be grouped in eight 'movements' of ritual performance:

I — Preparation of the site:	1. *aṅkura* (sowing the seed)
	2. *śikhi-yāga* (fire-offerings)
II — starting signal:	3. *bheritāḍana* (beating of the ritual drum)
	4. *dhvajārohaṇa* (hoisting the god's banner)
III — preparation of the god to be taken outside the temple:	5. *yāgakarma* (preparation of an 'outdoor' seat of the god)
	6. *astrayāga* (bestowal of weapons and protective threads on the god)
	7. *balidāna* (propitiation of gods residing along the processional route, accompanied by weapons. Circumambulation of the clothes which the god is to wear during the procession)
IV — procession of the god surrounded by all pomp:	8. *pradakṣiṇa* (circumambulation)
V — royal court: display of divine splendour for the benefit of the crowd of devotees:	9. *pariveṣa* (dressing)
	10. *nīrājana* (offering light)
	11. *Kautuka* (providing protective thread)
VI — purification of the evil influences that have attached themselves to the god:	12. *tīrthasaṃgraha* (bath in holy water)
	13. *cūrṇakara* (rinsing with protective powders)
	14. *tīrtha* (further ablutions)
VII — withdrawal of the *utsava* into its source:	15. *dhvajāvarohaṇa* (lowering the gods banner)
VIII — peaceful auspiciousness established	16. *snāpana* (final washing)

In the second part of this chapter we will investigate more closely the individual steps of the *utsava* in order to distinguish the role of the devadasi therein. All officiants are told to perform the rituals with great care and precision, as the *utsava* is a very powerful means to maintain order and prosperity: "The *Skandotsava* gives *bhukti* (material enjoyment) and *mukti* (liberation from rebirth), it is divine, and yields pleasure for all beings; it is pleasurable to all worlds, it is auspicious and ever yielding victory; it causes success in everything, it is beautiful, it destroys all enemies and gives the desired fruit of all wishes; it makes the *bhūtas* and *rākṣasas* (types demons) perish and shields and mortals."[40] Or, in simple words from a priest in Mel Ceval, the aim of an *utsava* is "to bring prosperity to the people", and "to instill some kind of knowledge".[41]

Performers

"In Hinduism, no intermediary is necessary between god and worshipper. This fact is very important. However, it does not preclude the existence of specialists whose profession it is to deal with ritual matters."[42]

The devotee can worship at home *and* in the temple of his own accord. At home he can perform worship in the *pūjā*-room without the help of a priest. For certain special ritual occasions, like *Navarātri*,[43] *śrāddha* (rites for the dead) or *saṃskāras* (rites of passage), the participation of the domestic priest (*purohita*) is necessary. In the temple the individual worship is restricted to having *darśana* (audience) and placing lamps at minor shrines situated in the *prakāras* ('circumambulatory'). For the real ritual offering of food, flowers, camphor or lamps and its *prasāda*, the temple priest (*arcaka*, *gurukkaḷ*) must mediate.

In both cases, at home and in the temple, the devotee must worship in a state of ritual purity (*maṭi*). One of the reasons for the necessity of a temple priest to perform the ritual actions may be that the divine power that is present in the temple is too strong and thus too dangerous to be dealt with by individuals whose ritual purity cannot be ascertained. The class of temple-priests vouchsafes the necessary adherence of ritual purity and know-how (*mantras*, ritual formulas, and *mudras*, ritual gestures, in combination with ritual actions) to be in direct contact with and to 'control' the Divine enshrined in the temple.

All those involved in ritual contact with the Divine, whether Brahmin or Sudra, must go through certain initiation-*cum*-purification rites that enable them to face their task. The degree of caste-purity, combined with the degree of *dīkṣā*, explains the various degrees of prestige in the task to be performed. According to the Saiva tradition, ritual initiation has five stages[44]:

1. *Samayadīkṣā* (ordinary initiation)	enables the person to join the Saiva community; the person becomes *samayin*; it

	confers the right but not the duty to perform rites (except the fire-rite);
2. *Viśeṣadīkṣā* (special initiation)	confers the right to perform the fire-ritual; one becomes *putra* ('son');
3. *Nirvāṇadīkṣā* (supreme initiation)	destroys the fetters of the soul and potentially unites with Śiva; one becomes *sādhaka* ('skilful one')

Grades 2 and 3 permit the performance of the complete cult.

4. *Abhiṣeka* (special unction)	transform the initiate Śaivite into an *acārya* or *guru*, and is as a rule conferred only on the members of the *brāhmaṇa gurukkaḷ* community;
5. *Abhiṣeka* + membership in the *Śaivabrāhmaṇa* alias *Ādiśaiva* (*gurukkaḷ*) caste	the right to perform *parārtha pūjā* (worship on behalf of others), i.e., the specific task of a temple priest in the temple cult.

The initiation stages three and four can, as a rule, be conferred only on members of the hereditary temple-priest caste. Other ritual performers can be accepted in the first three degrees. The ritual initiation of the devadasi will be dealt with in Chapter III (see p. 185); it shares with the initiation of other non-Brahmin officiants the necessity of *muttirai* (Skt. *mudrā* 'sign', meaning here the ritual branding of the aspirant).[45]

It is important to note that the devotee, the worshipper, and the visitor of a temple should all be initiated. This fact is obscured nowadays since the temple has been opened to all castes, even outcastes and foreigners. This is, in fact, a highly undesirable state of affairs from the point of view of orthodox Hinduism. And, indeed, some temples, especially some very orthodox Vaishnava and Murukaṉ temples, still refuse to admit foreigners and Indian Christians.

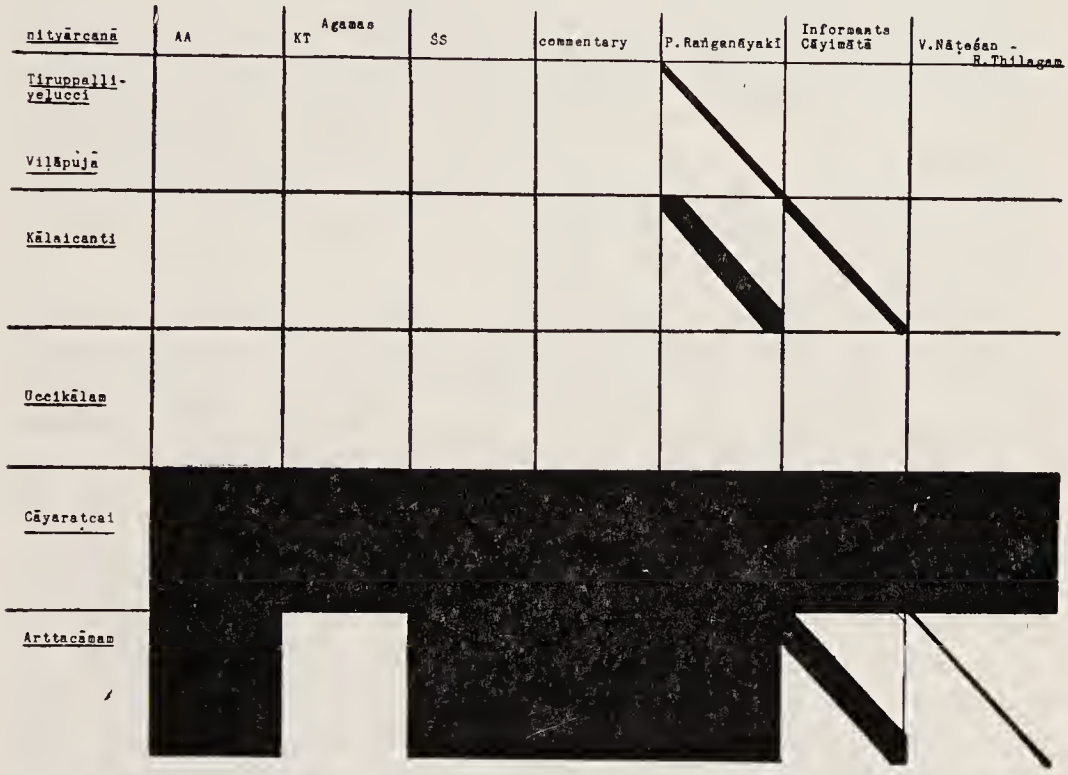
This feeling can be understood when we realise the aim of temple worship. According to some sects the object of the worshipper is to transform himself into Divinity. Therefore any disturbing influences (*vāsanas*) hinder him from achieving his goal. Moreover, the temple is a *locus* filled with 'sacred power' where the balance of auspicious and inauspicious forces is kept under careful control; unknown and non-initiated influences may disturb this precarious balance to an extent that cannot be forseen.

With this fear of the orthodox Hindu in mind the metaphor of the *sacer ludus* which demands initiated performers proves meaningful in the context of Hindu temple ritual.[46]

2. *Function of the devadasi within the structure of Agamic ritual Nityārcanā —daily ritual*

(*a*) *Survey*

The following survey of the devadasi participation in daily ritual is based on data gathered from ritual texts, their commentaries, and from interviews with former devadasi temple dancers and temple-musicians. A graphic description is given below:



Graph 9: quantitative survey of devadasi participation in daily ritual

1. *Tiruppaḷḷiyeḻucci* (rising up from the sacred couch) ca. 4.00 A.M.: Although the custom of raising the god in the morning with 'auspicious sounds and sights' must have been a rather elaborate ritual, the manuals studied here, make no mention of it in the context of *nityārcanā*. One of our informants, Smt. P. Raṅganāyakī remembered that her grandmother Smt. Subburatnammā, used to sing the song *Mēlukolupu* (see further p. 153) every morning whereas Smt. P. Raṅganāyakī was expected to do so only in the month of Mārkaḻi (December-January).[47] In Tamil literature we find examples of this type of songs as early as Māṇikkavācakar (9th cent. A.D.),[48] while many Sanskrit compositions of a similar type, called *Suprabhāta* ('beautifully illuminated by dawn'), survive and are composed even today.[49] In Telugu *Mēlukolupu* songs have been composed among others by Śrī Tyāgarāja (1760-1847) as part of his *utsava sampradāya*. The custom of 'sounding' *Mēlukolupu* early morning continues in the living tradition of the *nāgasvara* players.[50]

2. *Viḷāpūjā* ('unfolding *pūjā*') ca. 6'00 A.M. is sometimes joined with the performance of *kālaicanti pūjā* and of *ciṟukālaicanti* ('small morning *sandhi*') at ca. 9.00 a.m. according to the informants. The *kālaicanti* or *ciṟukālaicanti pūjā* is the first worship in the day that provides the deity with ablutions (*abhiṣeka*) combined with a small-scale procession (*utsava*) however, this procession is often omitted. Therefore we have interpreted the data pertaining to the tasks of the devadasi in the ritual of *abhiṣeka* as belonging to the evening *pūjā*. Two informants, Smt. P. Raṅganāyakī and Smt. Cāyimātā,[51] remembered their share in the (*ciṟu*) *kālaicanti pūjā*. Smt. Cāyimātā had to bring clean plates (*taṭṭu*) for offering light as part of the *pūjā*, whereas Smt. P. Raṅganāyakī accompanied the small-scale *utsava* (which she called *cuṟṟi kōyil pūjā*, i.e., *pūjā* at the shrines surrounding the main shrine) singing songs for the deities of those shrines; an example of these compositions (*stotra*) is given on p. 154. Both informants denied that it belonged to their task to clean the precincts of the temple as is stated in the commentary on *Kāmikāgama* by Sadyojātaśivācārya.[52])

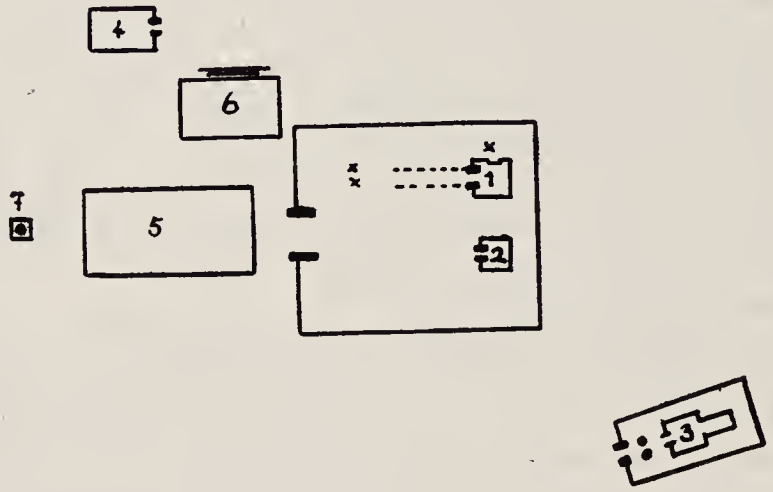
3. *Uccikālam* (*pūjā* at 'zenith-time') ca. 11.00 A.M. 12.00 noon: This worship seems not to have been very popular. None of the informants mentioned it as important, although the Agamas consider it a full-scale ritual.

4. *Cāyaraṭcai* ('dusk' *pūjā*) ca. 16.00-18.00 P.M. and onwards: As shown by Graph 9, the ritual participation by devadasis was concentrated on this *pūjā*. On the whole this worship is considered very important, and the largest number of devotees can be found in the temple at this time. At home, too, it is the morning and dusk *sandhis* that are observed without fail. These are considered 'auspicious' moments that mark the advent of a new period. In the case of the *sandhi* of dusk, a dangerous period sets in. According to South Indian housewives the goddess Lakṣmī 'lives' in these two particular *sandhis*.[53] At this very charged moment, the devadasi should wave the pot-lamp (*kumbhadīpa*) to dispel evil eye (*dṛṣṭi*) from the image in the temple. This lamp should be waved as the last, and all other lamps should be extinguished in it.[54] Smt. P. Raṅganāyakī remembered that the waving of the pot-lamp (*kumbhārati*) was performed by regular turns. The number of turns to offer the pot-lamp corresponded to the number of houses available for devadasi families. The right to become a devadasi fit for this task and to enjoy the use of the house and lands attached to it was a hereditary one. In Smt. P. Raṅganāyakī's time, the temple maintained nine houses; these corresponded to a cycle of nine years. Each year one house would be in charge of the service of offering the *kumbhadīpa*. Smt. P. Raṅganāyakī and her family belonged to the fifth house. During the year that her house would be responsible for the ritual, it had to be kept in absolute ritual purity (*maṭi*).[55] The devadasi belonging to it would have to carry out her duty observing the rules of ritual purification very strictly; she should wear a nine-yards *sārī*, tied in the Brahmin way (*maṭisār*), *kumkumam* and *vibhūti* on her forehead, a great number of black-bead strings,[56] and her hair tied in a knot.[57] Further details about the way of dressing

are given by Sadyojātaśivācārya (see p. 118). The *kumbhadīpa* should be purified by the priest by sprinkling some water and *bilva*-leaves, only then the devadasi would receive it from his hands. After rotating the lamp before the main deity she should repeat the same ritual at the other shrines. At the same time other devadasis would sing *maṅgalas*, standing at the side with their arms crossed over each other 'like a servant'. After the offering of the *kumbhadīpa*, another devadasi would dance *puṣpāñjali* ('flower-salutation'), a small composition that combined a *śloka* (verse) on the pertinent deity with a modest choreography. The combination of the *kumbhārati and puṣpāñjali at Cāyaraṭcai pūjā* was remembered by *all informants* and seems to me *the most important and significant function of the devadasi in the daily ritual.* The text, choreography and possible ritual aspects of this composition will be dealt with on p. 154 ff.

The *Cāyaraṭcai pūjā* being the most popular worship of the day is performed with greater pomp than any of the previous *pūjās*. According to Smt. P. Raṅganāyakī devadasis would fan the god with fly-whisk tails (*cāmara*) during this worship; in fact, the right to do so belonged to her family. Similarly, the small-scale daily procession (*nityotsava*) would also receive more attention. The Agamas describe the *nityotsava* as more detailed and elaborate than is the recent practice. In the Agamas we find that the song and dance play a prominent part (see further p. 116 ff.); however, our informants do not remember a large role of music and dance in the daily *utsava*. "Grandmother used to dance something like '*ta tey tey tat*',[58] but in our time this was not done", said Smt. P. Raṅganāyakī, "whoever wished to do so would perform a small *pada, jāvali* or any song on god, not more. Who would come ?" Indeed, nowadays, the *nityotsava* does not draw as much attention as the rituals that are performed inside the temple. Only in festival times a 'good crowd' accompanies a procession.[59] These data concerning devadasi participation in *Cāyaraṭcai pūjā* correspond largely with those given by other informants. An important addition is made, however, by the informants from further southern districts of Tamilnadu. Both in Pudukkottai and in Tiruvarur devadasis used to imitate the ritual actions of the priest during *dīpārādhanā* for the benefit of the devotees who can never enter the *sanctum;* the terms *śuddha nṛttam* (pure dance) and *kaikkāttum muṟai* (display of hands) is connected with this imitation.[60] In Tiruvarur, the *Cāyaraṭcai pūjā* did involve the participation of several groups of devadasis and their complementary cooperation. According to one informant, Śrī V. Naṭeśa,[61] three groups of devadasis participated in the *Cāyaraṭcai pūjā :* the *periyamuṟai* (major group),[62] the *ciṉṉamuṟai* (minor group) and the devadasis for the goddess Kamalāmbāḷ. This division will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter III. (p. 184). Śrī V. Naṭeśa described the pūjā as follows: "During the daily *Cāyaraṭcai pūjā* a devadasi, belonging to the *periyamuṟai*, stands in front of the shrine of Śrī Tyāgarājasvāmī and imitates the ritual actions that are performed by the priest during the offering of *dīpārādhanā* (*kaikkāṭṭum muṟai*). She

should stand between the *Cuntaramūrtti sannidhi*[63] and the sacred bull Nandi, in front of Śrī Tyāgarājasvāmī. She is clad in a white pyjama over which she wears a long upper-cloth. Her hair is tied in a knot, like Siva's hairdo, and she wears a *rudrākṣa* (Saivite rosary).[64]

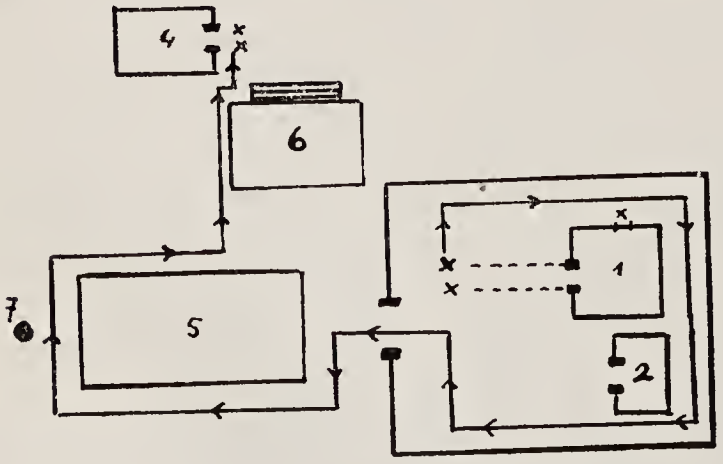


1. Śrī Tyāgarājasvāmī
2. Śrī Vaṉmīkanātha
3. Śrī Kamalāmbāḷ
4. Śrī Gaṇeśa
5. *rājanārāyaṇa maṇḍapa*
6. *taṭṭucurri maṇḍapa*
7. *dhvajastambha*

xx *periyamuṟai* devadasis
x *ciṇṇamuṟai* devadasis
●● Kamalāmbāḷ devadasis

Graph 10a: *Cāyaraṭcai pūjā* in Tiruvarur

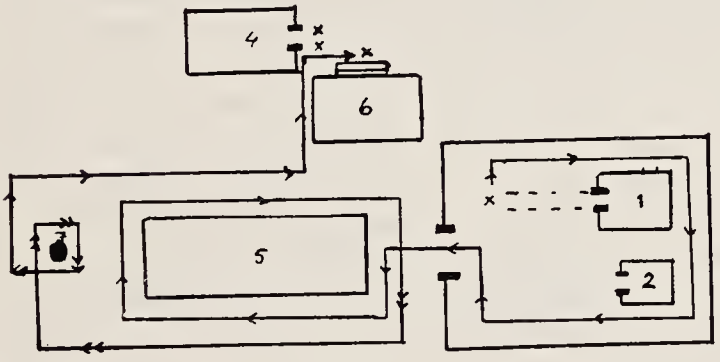
After this imitation of *dīpārādhanā* the devadasis belonging to the *periyamuṟai* walk around the first *prakāra* (circumambulatory), accompanied by the *mṛdangam* player (drummer) and the dance-master (*naṭṭuvaṉār*). Hereafter they move to the *rājanārāyaṇa maṇḍapa* to circumambulate it as well. Then, reaching the Śrī Gaṇeśa shrine, one devadasi will execute pure dance-



Graph 10b: *Cāyaraṭcai pūjā* in Tiruvarur (ctnd.)

steps (*śuddhanṛtta*). At the same time the other group of devadasis, belonging to the *ciṉṉamuṟai,* sings outside the *garbhagṛha* at the Saturn side." According to Smt. P.R. Thilagam[65] the song sung at this moment was *Vācalitu vācalitu.*[66]

"After *dīpārādhanā* for the Lord by means of five plates, each symbolising one face of the god, they receive these plates and take them round into the first *prakāra,* to the second *prakāra,* round the *rājanārāyaṇa maṇḍapa* and round the first flagpost (*dhvajastambha*). Reaching the Vigneśvara (i.e., Śrī Gaṇeśa) shrine they (i.e., the *ciṉṉamuṟai dāsīs*) should offer the plates at the *taṭṭucuṟṟimaṇḍapa* to Gaṇeśa. During that ritual they sing, which completes their part for the day. Only one of them returns to the Saturn side of the *sanctum* and plays the flute.[67] While performing their duties the *ciṉṉamuṟai* devadasis wear ordinary *sāris.* The third group of devadasis, those belonging to the shrine of Śrī Kamalāmbāḷ, follow their own program: daily, after 6.00 o'clock P.M., they sing songs glorifying goddess Kamalāmbāḷ at her own separate shrine."



Graph 10c : *Cāyaraṭcai pūjā* in Tiruvarur ctnd.

5. *Arttacāmam* and *Paḷḷiyaṟai cēvai* ca. 20.00 P.M. and onwards. The last two rituals that are accessible to the public are often performed in close succession. After another *dīpārādhanā,* this time less elaborate, the god or goddess is carried to the bed-chamber (*paḷḷiyaṟai*); in this case the deity is represented either by a small image or by his slippers (*pāduka*). In the bed-chamber the divine pair is seated together on a swing, and gently rocked to sleep. Lullabies (*lāli*) and swing songs (*ūñjal*) used to be sung by devadasis[68] and one example of each is given on p. 159-60. According to Sadyojātaśivācārya a *rudragaṇikā* should perform *Kaintarvyam*[69] in the bedroom of the divine couple (see p. 118). Hereafter the doors of the bedroom should be closed to be opened only next morning with the auspicious sounds of *Mēlukolupu.*

The rituals performed after mid-day are described in detail in the Agamas. These data, found in the *Ajitāgama, Śrīpraśnasaṃhitā, Kumāratantra* and in the commentary on *Kāmikāgama* by Sadyojātaśivācārya will be given now in the form of a comment on this survey of the participation by devadasis in the daily ritual.

(*b*) *Agamic comment*

Dīpārādhanā

The most characteristic task of the devadasi, i.e., the participation in the offering of lights to the deity, is scarcely attested in the Agamas.

Ajitāgama[70]

Arātrikavidhi, dīpapātrāṇi[71]

This chapter describes the offering of light and especially the type of lamps or plates onto which the fire is placed. These fire-plates (*dīpapātrāṇi*) should be brought by *rudrāyatanayoṣid* ('women belonging to Rudra', i.e., Siva). This ritual is considered to remove all flaws.

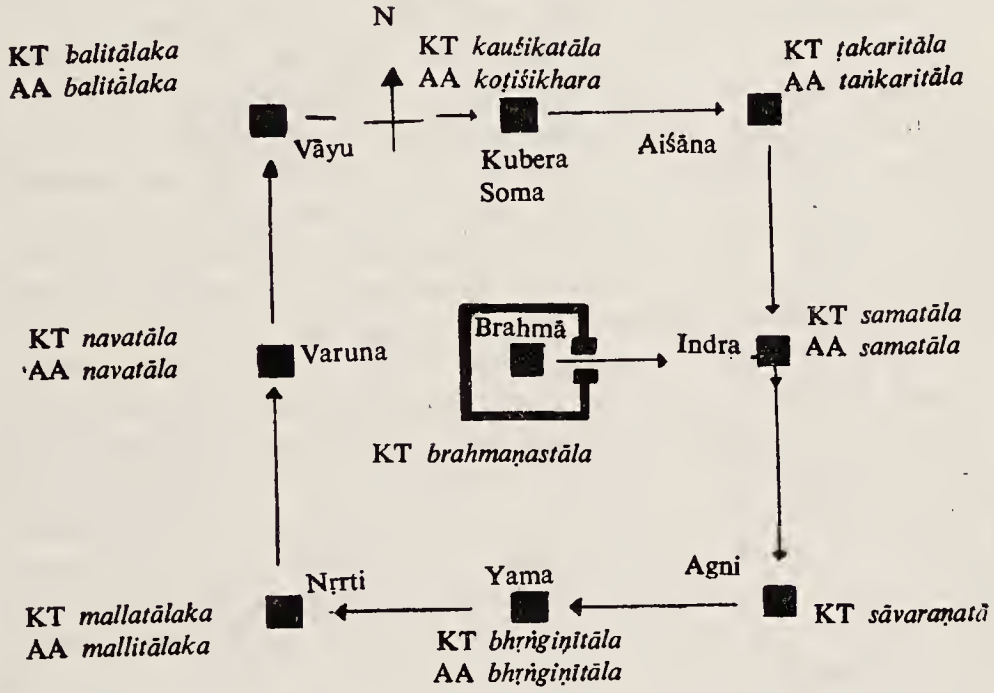
Nityotsava

The conclusion of the evening *pūjā* by a procession receives more attention. *Ajitāgama*:[72] After having offered food during the *pūjā* of the *mahāsandhi* the priest should close the ritual performance with dance (*nṛtta*). The later offerings of *dhūpa* (incense), *dīpa* (light), fanning, a mirror, a parasol, and a flywhisk, song and dance should be offered by the priest.[73] During the first *sandhi* of the night *calukoda* (offering of water) is performed:[74] "The goddess-who is fully adorned-should be taken from the *śaktisthāna* (shrine of Śakti) and should be placed at the left side of the *liṅga* in the inner shrine, accompanied by song and dance, the conch and the kettle-drum. Further on mention is made of the lustration of the holy slippers (*pādukārādhanā*) during the second part of the night, accompanied by song, dance, and the playing of the conch and the kettle-drum. The *nityotsava* proper consists of a triple *pradakṣiṇa* (cricumambulation).[75] The first circumambulation is to be accompanied by the regular pomp consisting of the sound of the conch, kettle-drum, the display of the parasol and fly-whisk and peacock-banner and the performance of song and dance. The next *pradakṣiṇa* features the accompaniment by *trayam ekam* and *yātudhanu* tongs.[76] The last round should be performed in silence outside the *sanctum,* and inside with the accompaniment of particular *tālas* (see further p. 117).

Kumāratantra,[77] *nityārcanāvidhi* advises the priest to perform the daily fire ritual, offering of holy ashes, the mirror, parasol and fan, to arrange a daily procession and show Lord Ṣaṇmukha (i.e., Murukaṉ) dance, song and instrumental music.[78] The daily procession is described in more detail:[79] "After worshipping the peacock, the priest should make a *gaṇikā* who is well washed and well smelling carry the parasol. The parasol should be accompanied by the *dhvaja* (banner) and the peacock-feather fan, several instruments and songs, and by a number of lights and devotees." The daily *pradakṣiṇa* amounts to three rounds: in the first, the *bheri* (drum) should lead the procession; the second round should be accompanied by *varanṛtta* ('exquisite dance'), while vocal music should accompany the third circumambulation.[80] The *Kumāratantra*, too, gives a set of *tālas* that are to be played during the *nityotsava*. (see further p. 117).[81]

Śrīpraśnasaṃhitā : after the customary offerings belonging to the evening *pūjā*, the priest should let the god travel over the four roads (around the *sanctum*) accompanied by song and dance and by the music of stringed instruments as well as by servants of the type that please the king, and similar courtiers.[82]

Tālas for nityotsava



Graph 11 : schematic representation of the nine cardinal points (*sandhi*) and their appropriate *tālas*

Liṅgapūraṇa

Ajitāgama makes mention of this special ritual of 'filling the *liṅga*' under the section of *nityārcanā*[83]; it causes fulfillment of *kāma* (desire) and *artha* (material needs). Apart from the regular offerings, the *mantra* of the year and of all *ātmas* ('self') should be recited, *stotras* (praise), auspicious instruments and songs should be heard as well as dance performed.

Participation by devadasis in nityārcanā according to Sadyojātaśivācārya's commentary on the Kāmikāgama[84]

The commentator distinguishes three types of devadasis: *rudragaṇikā*, *rudrakkaṉṉikai* and *rudradāsi*. Among them, the *rudragaṇikā* has to perform the following tasks in the daily ritual: "She must sweep and wash the *prakāra* (circumambulatory) from the *mahāmaṇḍapa* ('great pavillion') to the *garbhagṛha;* adorn it by drawing clearly (a pattern) with five mixed powders.[85] At the time of *dīpārādhanā* she should perform *śuddhanṛttam* ('pure dance')

joined with 38 different arts....(unclear) reached with Sakti. According to truthful enunciation this is called *dīpārādhanā*: the performance of offering of lamps in unbroken order, namely, the lampstand in the shrine of Sadyojāta (Śiva) and of Pañcabrahmā,[86] for Citśakti exclusively the *pūrṇakumbha* ('full pot'), the lamp that is connected with the *Īśāna kalā* (namely) the *rudragaṇikā ratha* that has become the *Śivaratha*;[87] after having given the lamp into her hand the *ācārya* performs *visarjana* ('dismissal') by means of the mirror, while keeping his face averted, and while *stotras* (praise-poems) are performed according to the *dictum* of the *kṣetra* (temple, sacred place).

There are three divisions of *kalā* in the *śaktikalā*: 64, 38, 16; they are called the division of *upacārakalās*. At the end of *dīpāradhanā* it is necessary to extinguish all lamps in the *pūrṇakumbha*. The *pūrṇakumbha* is the most important of all lamps. It is necessary that a well-ordained *rudragaṇikā* performs *liṅgalayam* (dissolution/absorption of the *liṅga*) by means of a black stone that is present. If this is omitted, the *pūjā* will obtain destruction; the king and the country will perish, *bhūtaloka*[88] will come into existence. The lamps should be disposed of via the *ācārya* who stands at the side of the *rudragaṇikā*. Hereafter, the *rudragaṇikā* must perform *śuddhanṛttam*.

There are three types of *nṛttaṇam: śuddham, miśram* and *kevalam*. The *nṛttaṇam* accompanied by *abhinaya* that befit the *bhedas* (different aspects) of Umā, Maheśvara, etc. and that is danced in front of the *Śivaliṅga* in the form of *karaṇas*[89] which consist of a beauty belonging to *Śivajñāna*, is called *śuddhanṛttam*. When the *purāṇas* are added to this form, this *nṛttaṇam* is called *miśram*. The secular version (*lokavṛttamāna*) of this dance is called *kevalam*. It is said that *śuddhanṛttam* is proper for *rudragaṇikās, miśranṛttanam* for *rudrakkaṉṉikais*, and *kevalanṛttam* for *rudradāsīs*. In connection with this, the *rudragaṇikā* should complete the *nityapūjā*, according to proper timing, and at the occasion of both *utsavapūjā* and *nityapūjā*.

When the evening approaches, and during the lustration of the respected slippers, those mentioned before who belong to the *prakāra*[90] should dance and sing (*nṛttaṇam, gānam*). At the time of *brahmāmuhūrta*,[91] *snānam* (ritual bath) is done, the *rudragaṇikā* is left in the bedroom and performs *kaintarvyam*.[92] Having lit one additional lamp, circling it round like a servant, she should perform the same service in the *pāṭhaśālā* (place where the Vedas are taught), too.

This *rudragaṇikā* should tie (a *sārī* with) golden border around her leg; alternatively, she must tie (a) silver (border) on both legs.[93] The *rudragaṇikā* should wave the fly-whisk made out of peacock-feathers after she has danced to the accompaniment of the *mṛdangam* (drum) while that lamp burns.

Conclusions

On the basis of the evidence found in the literary sources and the accounts of our informants, we may regard the devadasi-participation in the ritual of *dīpārādhanā* as her most characteristic task in the *nityārcanā*. However, the sources differ with regard to the extent of her participation in the actual

offering of lights. In general, the *dīpārādhanā* at the close of a ritual is considered an effective method of removing evil influences (*dṛṣṭiparihāra*). Whereas the Āgamas delegate this important task often to the priest, and allow the devadasi only a minor role (like handing over the plates) or a different role (namely that of performing song and dance), the commentary and the informants themselves stress the importance of the devadasi in the ritual of *dīpārādhanā* with great emphasis. All informants agreed upon the tradition that a devadasi should offer the *kumbhadīpa* and either recite or perform *puṣpāñjali*. Some informants, however, believed that the offering of the pot-lamp was only a remainder of a much larger share of the devadasi in daily worship. According to two informants from Tiruvarur[94] the entire ritual of *dīpārādhanā* was performed by devadasis till the beginning of this century. What remained from this task was the rotating of the *kumbhadīpa*—the lamp that is closely associated with the goddess, and thus with the devadasi[95], and the imitation of the priest, who offered the other lamps, by the show of hands (*kaikāṭṭum muṛai*) which was quoted by other informants as *śuddha nṛttam*. Not only does the commentary on *Kāmikāgama* allow such an interpretation, but so does the inscriptional evidence, describing how the worshippers should stand behind the *māṇikkam* while offering *tiru ālattl*.[96] This term and the ritual of performing *dṛṣṭiparihāra* by means of waving lamps survived up to the 20th century in the houses of private persons.

Therefore, it seems plausible to presume that, indeed, the most important task of the devadasi (*rudragaṇikā, māṇikkam*) was to remove evil influences from the deity. Her special qualification of being ever-auspicious (*nitya-sumaṅgalī*) made her more suited to this task than any of the ritual personnel. Formerly, she may have performed the entire ceremony of *dīpārādhanā*, while in recent times her role was reduced to waving only the most characteristic lamp, the *pūrṇakumbha* or *kumbhadīpa*. Not only the task of removing evil influences, and even more strikingly so the use of the *kumbhadīpa* (that is considered a synonym of the goddess), but also the task of *liṅgalayam* (reabsorption of the *liṅga*) seems to connect the devadasi with Tantrism, especially with Kuṇḍalinī Yoga. Sanjukta Gupta[97] gives the following description of layayoga: "The Layayoga states that since the macrocosm and microcosm both owe their creation to Brahman and Prakṛti, they are closely related, or might even be considered identical. Therefore knowledge of the microcosm automatically results in knowledge of the macrcosm. On the individual level, the phenomenal world functions when Kuṇḍalinī, the infinitisemal part of Cosmic Energy (Śakti), lies asleep in the individual's mūlādhāra. By awakening her, and bringing her up to the point just above the top of the suṣumnā, called sahasrāra cakra, where Cosmic Energy—the aggregate of all Kuṇḍalinīs—resides in inseperable union with Parama Śiva (Brahman, the Supreme Reality), and there merging with her with the Cosmic Energy, the yogin is able to obtain spiritual release from the bondage of this world and everything worldly. We can see in the process that symbolically he has reversed the process of creation and effected the reabsorption of the world

(and himself) into undifferentiated unity. This process is known as Laya."

In evaluating the function of the devadasi in the daily ritual we should take these concepts into consideration. While, on the one hand, an anthropomorphic god is offered all comforts, including song and dance, a Cosmic process is, on the other hand, taking place: the generation of Cosmic Energy in the *liṅga*, that must be safeguarded (by means of *dīpārādhanā*), cooled off (by various offerings) and reabsorbed into an undifferentiated unity. If this were not effected, the Energy thus generated would "burn up the entire kingdom and *bhūtaloka* would come into existence". In other words, *the task of the devadasi was an extremly important and at the same time extremely dangerous task*. No one but a female so close to the auspiciousness of the goddess was considered fit to perform this task. As we have seen previously, the contact with and control of the divine is generally not regarded as a pleasant and safe activity. The privilege of the devadasi to deal with this most eruptive state of the divine is therefore striking and ambiguous: the artistic load of the devadasi tradition has obscured to a great extent the primary importance of the devadasi as a *nityasumaṅgalī* safeguarding and controlling the divine.

Naimittikārcanā—Festival Ritual

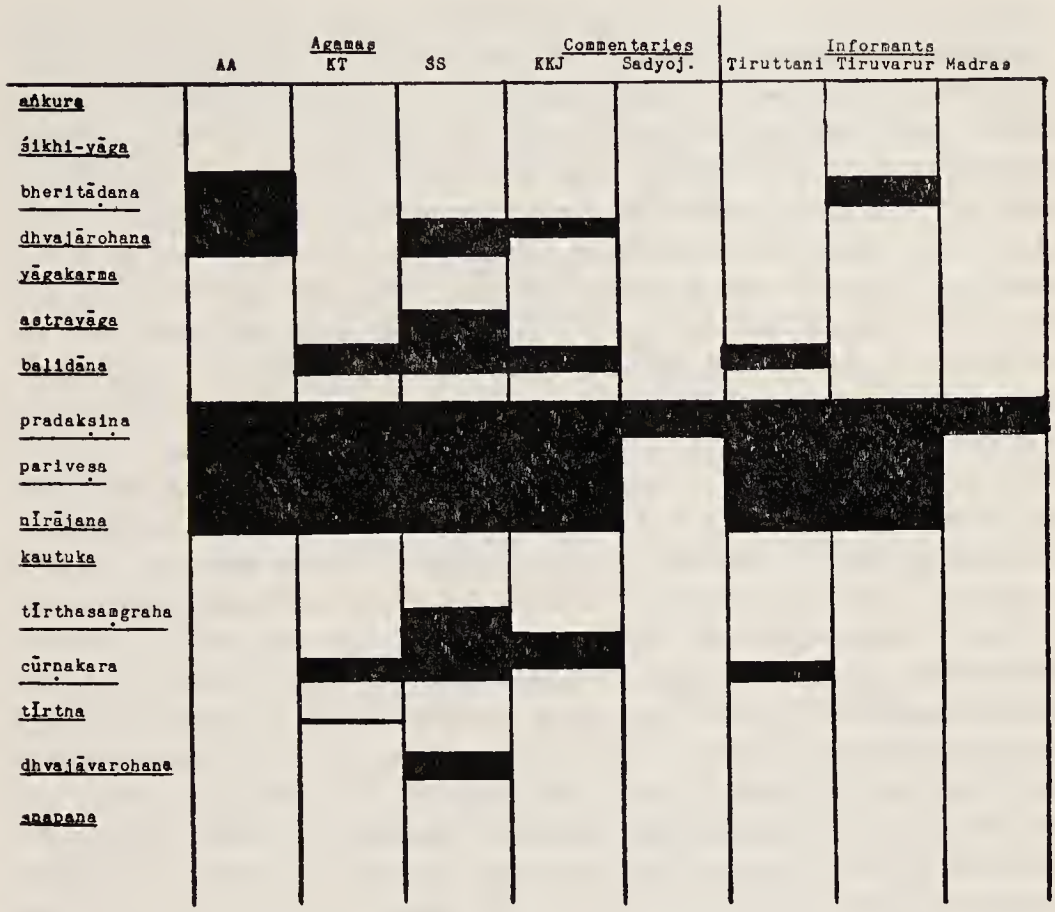
(*a*) *Survey*

In analogy with the graphic description of the function of the devadasi within the daily ritual (cf. p. 111), the following graph is based on data gathered from ritual texts, their commentaries, and from interviews with former devadasis. The extent and divergence of the data precludes, however, a survey similar to the one given on p. 111 ff. describing the *nityārcanā*. Therefore, *Graph* 12 will be commented upon according to the nature of the sources.

(*b*) *Agamic comment*

While discussing the 'drama' of temple ritual we followed the *Kumāratantra*[98] in discerning sixteen steps that mark the performance of a festival (*utsava*). We grouped these sixteen steps in eight major 'movements' through which the *utsava* evolves. At this point we will accept these eight movements as our point of departure, the details given by the *Kumāratantra* concerning the sixteen steps as a 'model-*utsava*', while the other Agamas and commentaries are quoted here as concurring evidence.

I. Preparation of the site: First of all, seeds (*aṅkura*) should be planted for the *dhvaja* (flag, banner) as well as for the *utsava* itself, since anything that is begun without the sowing of seeds will be without fructification. Instructions concerning the flag-cloth, its colours, material and image, and the flagpole follow. After preliminary purification-rituals, fire-offerings take place (*śikhiyāga*). *Ajitāgama* states that the banner of the god (in whose honour the festival is to be held) should be taken round the village; it should



Graph 12: quantitative survey of devadasi participation

be fully adorned and preceded by the trident. While circumambulating the village, *balidāna* should be offered accompanied by song and dance, and by cymbals as musical instruments.[99] The *Kriyākramajyoti*, a kind of *vademecum* for temple priests by Aghoraśivācārya,[100] gives the following details: the *triśūla* (trident), wrapped in a multicoloured cloth, should be worshipped before the beating of the drum (*bheri*) during the evening *pūjā* that precedes the first day of the festival.

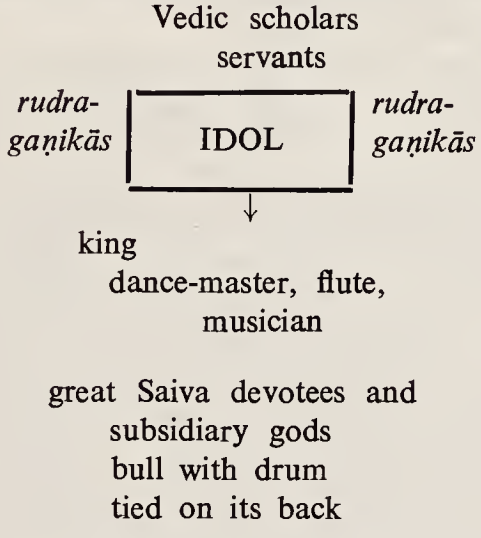
II. Starting signal: The preparations for beating the large drum (*bheritāḍana*) are complex. The *bheri* is considered an almost magnetic field of divine powers. *KT sūtras* 102-111 discuss these gods and their locus, and give instructions concerning the stick that is used for beating the drum. According to *KKJ* the following gods are to be invoked: Siva in the centre, the Saptamātṛkās ('seven little mothers') in the pegs to which the ropes of the drum have been fastened, the nine planets in the ropes, the serpent Vāsuki in the straps, and Kumāra in the stick. All these should be worshipped as residing in the drum, only then the *bheri* may be beaten. *AA* reverses the order of beating of the drum and then hoisting the banner. According to *AA* Ch. XXVII 103-4 first the banner is hoisted while appropriate *mantras* are recited and all 'auspicious instruments'[101] are played; only in *sūtras* 125-27 the moment of beating the drum arises. The procedure of beating the

drum varies slightly: *KT* prescribes that the first three beats should be given by a *deśika* (an initiated Brahmin officiant), after the drum has been bathed. These three beats should be accompanied by the *mayūramantra*, *triyambaka-mantra* and *brahmājajñāna*; hereafter he should leave the rest of the beating (according to fixed rhythms) to the expert (*vādyaka*) who is not a Brahmin officiant. The *KKJ* gives the first turn also to the priest who should strike the drum three times with *darbha* grass. Then he hands a flower over to a professional musician, who has been initiated, wears the sacred thread and uppercloth, sandal and flowers.[102] The drummer casts the flower onto the drum and is given permission to beat the *bheri* in Nandi *tāla*. The purification of the drum and of the muscian by the priest is prescribed, too, by *AA* Ch. XXVII 125-7; here, the *vādyaka* strikes the *bheri* in a fourfold manner. This is followed by the sounding of other instruments like the *vīṇā* (lute) and dance by *śivāyatanayōṣid* (women belonging to Siva); this should be repeated at the eight cardinal points (*sandhis*) around the sanctum. *KT* proceeds that after the ceremony of beating the drum, the flagstaff and banner are to be taken round the village; they should be accompanied by royal objects like the parasol, adorned with feathers, the whisk, incense and lights, and by sounds of the bell; meanwhile *mantras* should be uttered, and *bali* (sacrificial offering) should be given. This ritual of offering *bali* occurs at several critical moments during the entire festival; it is customary to conclude the 'throwing' of *bali* with *tāḷam* (beating the metal cymbals in a particular rhythm), *nṛttam* (dance) and *gītam* (song). The details of these music-*cum*-dance offerings are given on p. 127. *KKJ* agrees on this point concerning the necessity of offering *bali* accompanied by *rāgas* (melody-types), *tālas* (rhythmical patterns) and *nṛttas* (choreographies) that are appropriate to the main deities and subsidiary deities that are invoked (cf., too, p. 128). After this *dhvajotsava* (*KT*), finally, the banner may be hoisted.

III. Preparation of the god to be taken outside the temple: For the next step, *yāgakarma,* a sacrificial pavillion (*yāga-maṇḍapa*) must be arranged. The following *astra-yāga* supplies the god with his weapons and protective threads in preparation of his circumambulation outside the temple. The weapons are first worshipped and another *balidāna* is performed; more or less the same happens to the garderobe and the protective threads that should be worn by the processional image (*utsava-bera*). Finally, the god is placed in the pavillion (*maṇḍapa*), fully equipped with weapons, ornaments, protective threads (*kautukas* of gold, silver and cotton) and a special *rakṣasūtra,* another protective thread that has been adorned with seeds (*aṅkura*). The *Śrīpraśnasaṃhitā* advises that '*dāsīs*, instrumentalists and musicians must dance before the deity on earth'.[103] This text supplies, too, an elaborate list of offerings that form the *balidāna* which precedes actual 'grand procession' (*pradakṣiṇa*). This list is given on p. 128.

IV. Procession of the god surrounded by all pomp: A procession around the village (*grāmapradakṣiṇa*) should be accompanied by the performance of *pancanṛtta*[104] and by the sound of all groups of musical instruments. The

god who has been placed in the palanquin will now be moved out of the inner shrine of the temple. The priest who conducts the procession should start at the *Brahmāsthāna* and proceed to the *Brahmāsandhi*, only after water for the feet (*pādyācamana*), *arghya* (water), fruit and camphor placed on the *ghaṭadīpa*, have been offered. According to *KKJ* the processional group can be imagined thus:



Graph 13 : Composition of processional group according to Aghoraśivācārya's *Kriyākramajyoti*

The *KT* gives the following description of the processional *cortège*: "While the god has been hoisted on the palanquin, he should be accompanied—according to the *śāstras* (ritual manuals) by the tumult of the conch and of *brahmā*[105]; he should be provided with all adornments and the colourful banner (*citradhvaja*), and with a flock of *gaṇikās*. All instruments should be nearby as well as the Brahmins; great Saiva devotees should close the *cortège*. The Lord should have Sumitreśa[106] in his proximity and be surrounded by all people. The drum should be carried in front and should be beaten according to the proper time and place. Such a procession should be arranged for Skanda with his two Saktis. By performing such a procession one attains 'step by step' the merit of the *aśvamedha*".[107] The *AA* Ch. XXVII 254-66 adds to this enumeration the necessity of carrying incense, burning lamps, swings and ritual diagrams (*yantra*) along; bulls and elephants should also take part in the procession. An even more elaborate account of the processional group than found in the *KT* or *AA*, is given by the *ŚS* (Ch. XXXV 28-39): There should be Vaishnavas, Sudras, both full of devotion and protectors of the image. Among the believers who accompany the group, some will dance the *turaṃga*,[108] some carry a stick, others a bouquet of leaves, and again some others carry plates for incense. The 'official' accompaniment of the god is formed by *parāśavas* (specially initiated non-Brahmin servants) who are seen in front of the image. They play a variety of musical

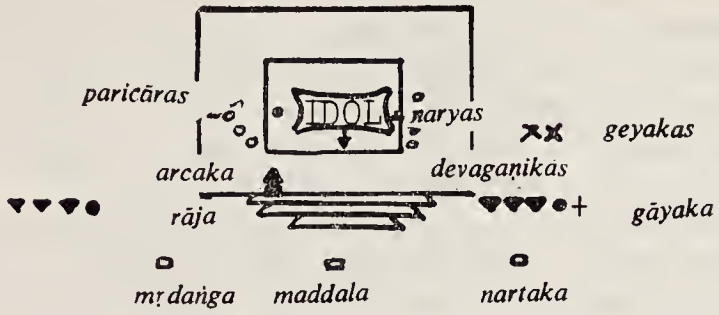
instruments: the *śaṅkha* (conch), *bheri* (large drum), *mṛdaṅga* (smaller, double-faced drum), *bṛhat bheri* (largest drum), *nāgavādyam* (type of oboe), *mallavādyam* (pot-drum),[109] several *tūryāṇi* (trumpets),[110] *vīṇā* (lute), *veṇu* (flute) and *kaṃsyaka* (metal cymbals). Further there should be female dancers (*nartakīs*) "in their youth, who should perform mime (*abhinaya*) with an abundance of *rasas* (emotional states) like *śṛṅgāra* (erotic involvement) while singing, accompanied by all different instruments. These young dancers should wear jewels as ornaments".[111]

After the processional group has returned to the temple the priest should place the god on a platform that has been temporarily constructed and that is richly adorned. At this point, Sadyojātaśivācārya comments[112] that the *rudragaṇikās* who belong to the *prakāras*[113] should first finish their daily tasks in the sanctum for the *mūlavigraha* ('root' or primary, immovable idol); hereafter they should perform *miśra nṛttam* (cf. p. 118) in medium tempo outside the sanctum. When the procession of the *utsavamūrti* (processional image) returns into the *prakāra*, they should perform both *miśra nṛttam* and *śivagaindharvyam* (cf. p. 118) in the *maṇḍapa*. For the performance of *miśra nṛttam* the *rudragaṇikās* should wear silver ankle-bells; if these are not available, they should wear bronze ankle-bells. It seems that their hair should be tied up.[114] They should wear a blouse, a white cloth arranged in the ritually pure way, all ornaments, jewels, sacred ash and the *rudrākṣa* (Saivite rosary). They should present themselves in a ritually clean state.[115] In the *prakāra* of the temples of Mahāmāri *rudradāsīs* should perform *kevala nṛttam*, while *grāmadāsīs* and *rudradāsīs* perform *nāṭakam* (dance-drama) in the temples of the goddesses Kāḷī and Durgā.

The *KKJ*, too, advises the performance of dance by *rudragaṇikās*, of instrumental (*vīṇā* and *veṇu*) and vocal music and of recitation of the Vedas after the return of the deity from the procession.

V. Royal court: display of divine splendour for the benefit of the devotees. From the temporary structure the divine pair is hoisted onto the lion-seat (*siṃhāsana*) and a truly royal court is established. *KT* XXX 233-8: On an elevated platform, near the god, there should be *paricāras* (courtiers) and *naryas* (women) who should be 'very enlightened' and who should wave the fan. Less close to the god, and a step lower in the *maṇḍapa* where the lion-seat is placed, should stand the priest (*arcaka*) and the king (*rājā*). *Devagaṇikās* should dance at the sides of the god-king, while their accompanying singers (*gāyakas*) stand in their midst. Other singers (*geyakas*) should be present at the left side. The *mṛdaṅga* and *maddala* drums should be roaring in front of the deity, while a male dancer (*nartaka*) faces the god as well. Apart from these offerings of music, song and dance, the usual *upacāras* (services) of water for the feet, of lights, camphor, holy ashes and the insignia of royalty like the mirror, umbrella, fan, etc. should be performed.

The *ŚS* advises the removal of evil eye (*dṛṣṭidoṣa*) as the first of offerings that are to be performed before the deity reposes in the *maṇḍapa* that faces



Graph 14 : Royal court in the *maṇḍapa*

that sanctum:[116] "after the priest has installed the Lord before the *mahāpīṭha* facing the main image (in the sanctum), evil eye should be removed immediately; he should employ a *dāsī* to bring the pot-lamp (*kumbhadīpā*); she should be well-washed, dressed in fresh clothes, be wearing a very clear Vaishnava mark on her forehead, she should be young, bend her head, wear all ornaments and she should have passed the five rites of passage, be a Vaishnavite, full of feeling, and present herself out of her own free will." Hereafter the ritual cleaning and the offering of the *kumbha* is described: the pot that is to be used for *nīrājana* should be cleaned while songs are sung; then sanctified water should be poured into it and it should be covered by means of a golden lotus; *aśvattha* (*Ficus Religiosa*) leaves, flower-garlands and rice should adorn it. The pot should be provided with a wick which is to be lit by fire from the temple-kitchen; thus the pot is taken to the image of the god while the sound of musical instruments precedes it. The priest places the pot before the god, utters the *astramantra*, invokes the god Varuṇa in the water inside the pot and Agni in the burning wick; he sprinkles sandal water and flowers, offers *arghya* (water) and moves the lamp from the feet of the god around all his limbs two or three times (!).[117] After replacing the lamp and after uttering the *netramantra*, five or seven *dāsīs* hold lamps with clarified butter in front of the pot-lamp.[118] After a *pradakṣiṇa* (procession)—accompanied by all kinds of musical instruments—the lamps are placed on the *balipīṭha*. Another light-offering is performed, some food is offered and the deity is removed from the processional mount onto the *bhadrapīṭha* (splendid throne) where he enjoys the royal court mentioned above. Finally, towards the end of the night, he is taken to the bed-chamber in the temple to enjoy the company of the goddess.

The procession of the *utsavamūrti* (processional image), the removal of evil eye and the offering of a royal court in the *maṇḍapa* facing the sanctum, are the most characteristic facets of the entire *utsava* and are repeated for several days. Every day a different aspect of god is portrayed to the devotees. One day the god may appear in the attire of a hunter (*mṛgayātrotsava*), or on a huge chariot (*rathotsava*), or as a bridegroom marrying the goddess (*kalyāṇotsava*). The structure of each *utsava*-day that is dedicated to a procession is rather similar. Therefore we will not dwell here on the diffe-

rent 'topical' processions; this aspect of the sequence of various 'topics' and the particular emphasis that is given to certain topics at fixed times in the year will be dealt with later (cf. p. 128 ff.). However, the *KT* warns the reader that the priest should not 'mix levels' and should never perform a *maṇuṣotsava* (festival in honour of a human person) in the middle of a *devotsava* (festival for a god). Whoever does so will perish.[119]

VI. Purification of evil influences that have attached themselves to the god: When all 'topical' *pradakṣiṇas* have been performed in the course of several days, it is necessary to remove the evil influences that have accumulated because of evil eye and the 'heated' devotional performances that form part and parcel of an *utsava*. *KT* initiates the thorough purification of the diety by the *kṛṣṇagandha utsava:* black sandal paste (*kṛṣṇagandha*) is applied to Kumāra, his consorts, the priests, the devotees and the king. Hereafter the definite closing rites are started: *tīrthasaṃgraha* (ablution by holy water), *cūrṇakara*(application of cooling, auspicious sandal powder), and *tīrtha* (once more bathing ceremonies). As in the unfolding of the *utsava,* a procession around the village in accompaniment with *gaṇikās* plays an important role in the re-absorption of the festival. The *ŚS* states that on the seventh day there should be no *pradakṣiṇa;* inspite of that, *balidāna* should still be given. The floor in front of the god should be cleaned, and a metal pestle and mortar should be placed there. The mortar is decorated with sandal and sanctified by holy water; then paddy grain is put in it. The best of *gaṇikās* should cover their mouth and nostrils to prevent any pollution; in this outfit they should pound the grain while other *devadāsikās* perform dance and vocal music.[120] The *Śrīsūkta, Bhūmisūkta* and the Vedas should be recited at this occasion, and seven, five or one *kumbha* should be placed in front of the deity after cleaning them and decorating them with *cūrṇa* (sandal). After the ritual pounding of grain and a sacrifice at the *dhanyapīṭha* (wealth-bestowing pedestal), a circumambulation should follow accompanied by musical instruments.[121] Ch. XXXVII discusses the *śaitya upacāra* (offering of pleasant coolness). Because of all celebrations the gods are supposed to be in a very 'heated' state, therefore it is considered necessary to offer them some coolness, both for their own benefit as of that of the devotees whom they should protect in equanimity. *KKJ*, too, mentions the pounding of grain (here called *musalaghata*) by *rudragaṇikās* while *ślokas* (verses) and devotional songs are sung. Aghoraśivācārya explains the *śaitya upacāra* as the the offering of a refereshing bath and gentle swinging. At this occasion song and dance should be performed as well.[122]

VII. Withdrawal of the utsava into its source: As the end of the great festival approaches, all gods are imagined to return to their own regions. The banner is lowered (*dhvajāvarohaṇa*) and many *puṣpāñjalis* (flower offerings) take place. "*Dāsīs* adorned with all jewels and flowers, clad in beautiful dresses, well-perfumed and clean, should salute the Lord of the gods with the words 'Be victorious' and they should dance well, while some *dāsikās*

should sing and some others should please Hrisikesa by the sound of the *vīṇā* (lute), *veṇu* (flute) and *mṛdaṅga* (drum)."[123]

VIII. Peaceful auspiciousness established: After the last ablutions (*snapana, prāyaścitta*)[124] the final result of the *utsava* is firmly established: an auspicious path (*puṇya gati*), *dharma* (Hindu code of life), *śrī* (prosperity, happiness), *artha* (material goods), *kāma* (sensual pleasures), and *mokṣa* (delivery from the necessary chain of rebirths), victory and truth; ultimately even the world of Kumāra himself will be reached. The last instruction that precedes this description of the fruit (*phala*) of the *utsava* is that Guha (i.e., Murukaṉ, Kumāra) should be pleased every single night by dances.[125]

Before we will give a number of examples of 'topical' *utsavas* and their division throughout the year, we present on the following pages two surveys (*Graphs* 15 and 16) of the ritual of *balidāna* that is part of every *utsava.*

TĀLA	MInākṣi-Sundareśvara temple Madurai	P.Sambamoorthy	Ādi Bharata Kalā Mañjari	Naṭanāti Vāttiya Rañcanam	KKJ	KT	ŚS
Brahmā	brahmā	brahmā 1818	brahmā tisra ekam	brahmā tisraiātilaghu	brahmā	brahmā	dhruva
Indra	indra	indra 118100 (sama)	sama miśra cāpu	sama - tisra jātitriputal.	sama	sama	sama
Agni	mattāpaṇa	mattāpaṇa 10101	mattāpaṇa catusra jhampa	mattāpaṇa catusraj.jhampa	mattāvaraṇa	ardhāvāna	ṣṭa
Yama	bhṛṅgi	bhṛṅgi 1811 (asama)	bhṛṅgi catusra ekam	bhṛṅgi catusraj. laghu	bhṛṅgiṇī	bhṛṅgiṇī	maṅgala
Nṛtti	nṛtti	nṛtti 111100 bhramara-malla	malli tisra ekam	malla tisraj. laghu	malla	malla	jaya
varuṇa	nava	nava 10001	nava catusra ekam	nava siṅhānanda	nava	nava	bhadra
Vāyu	bali	bali 0001	bali catusra rūpakam	bali catusraj. rūpakam	bali	bali	jhampa
Kubera	koṭṭari	koṭṭari 1888	koṭṭari tisra ekam	koṭṭari tisraj.laghu	gaudi	naṭṭaprakāra	ananta
Īśāna	ṭakkari	ṭakkari 818	ṭakkari kaṇṭa ekam	ṭakkari anuma kumpam	ḍakkarī	ḍakkarī	-----
NṚTTA							
Brahmā	samapāda	---	kamala catura amaṣci-vam	kamala	aama	daṇḍapāda	kamala
Indra	bhujaṅga		bhujaṅgalalita svastikatrupa-takkam	bhujaṅgalalita	bhujaṅga	ūrdhvapāda-ka	vilāsa
Agni	maṇḍala		nṛttejānu tripatakam lan-kulam	jāṇunṛtta	maṇḍala	maṇḍala	sarvato-bhadra
Yama	daṇḍapāda		daṇḍapāda cuci pācam	daṇḍapāda	daṇḍapāda	bhujaṅgatrāsita	sarvato-bhadra
Nṛtti	bhujaṅgatrāsa		bhujaṅgatrāsa kaṭvacākaṭam	bhujaṅgatrāsa	bhujaṅgatrāsa	bhujaṅganṛtta	kamalad-vṛtta
Varuṇa	kuñcita		kuñcita patāka cikaram	kuñcita	kuñcita	nartanī	kamala
Vāyu	bhujaṅgalalita		kānti artta-patākam	kānti	bhujaṅgalalita	bhramari nṛtta	pṛṣṭhakuṭṭima
Kubera	sandhya		sandhyā patmakata aṣṭam	saadhyā	akuñcita	alīḍha	maṇḍala
Īśāna	ūrdhvapāda		bhramarī tripatāka cimmam	bhramarī	ūrdhva	pratiyālīḍha	-----
RĀGA							
Brahmā	---	---	mattiyamāvati	magha	vankula pan pañcama	megha	ghaṇṭa
Indra			kurjari	gāndhāram	p. kaumeśi	gāndhāragīta	nāṭa
Agni			nāṭṭai	gauli	varati p. kolli	gītaṅkolli	gauli
Yama			deśākṣi	kausika	rāmakiri p. kauśika	kauśikaṅgīta	daiśiki
Nṛtti			kuntalam	nāṭṭabhāṣa priya	bhairavi p.nāṭṭabhāṣa	naṭṭabhāṣa-gītaka	deśākṣi
Varuṇa			varāli	varuḷi	kuñcari p. śikāmara	śrī kāmara gītaka	nāṭa
Vāyu			makuṭa rāma-kiri	takkeśi	desagiri p. takkaśi	takkeśigītaka	śrīrāga
Kubera			mālavaśrī	mālavaśrī	gaudika p. kausika	tarkarāga	mohana
Īśāna			malakari malakiri	malakari	tundira p. śālāpāḍi	śālāpāṇigitaka	---

Graph 15 : *Tālas, nṛttas* and *rāgas* to be performed as part of the ritual of *balidāna* for the *navasandhi.*[126]

god	position	vehicle	colour	shape	sovereignity	weapons	food	svara	rāge	tāla	nṛtta
Kumuda	in between Aiśvāsa and Vāyu	elephant	white	3 eyes 4 arme red dress	lord over all devas	mukhyahasta abhāyamañjali in one hand vajra in other cakra	rice boiled in milk	ṣadje	gāndhāra	sama	vilāsam
Kumudākṣa	in between 2 Aindra-jvalana	buffalo	golden navel	3 eyes 4 arms dress purple-red	lord over dānavas	mukhyabasta añjaliyuta club, hammer	meat	vṛṣabha	kaulava	madhyama	viṣṇukrāntam
Puṇḍarika	in middle of Agni diśa	horse	red	3 eyes 4 arms dress darkblue	leader of pitaras	cakra, mace añjaliyuta	seede	gāndhāra	madhyamāvati	bhṛṅginī	ketakam
Vāmana	midway Yama region	car	white glowing	3 eyes 4 arms dress darkblue	lord of rākṣasas	vajra, śūla	tamarind	pañcama	śrīrāga	malla	bhadramālī
Śaṅkukarṇa	midway Varuṇa region	tiger	yellow	4 arms dress white	lord over pannagas	noose, hook	milk	dhaivata	bhupāla	mangalam	kāntārakuṭṭimam
Sarvanetra	midway Vāyu region	deer	smoke	3 eyes 4 arms dress white	leader of gandharvas	noose, axe	caṇaka (grass)	dhaivata	kedāra	jaya	vṛttakuṭṭimam
Sumukha	near Vāyu-Soma	lion	smoke	3 eyes 4 arms yellow dress	leader of yakṣas	cakra śakti	muḍga (beans)	niṣāda	haṃsadhvani	bhadra	pāribhadram
Supratiṣṭa	midway Soma-Īśāna diśa	snake	gold	3 eyes 4 arms gold dress	lord over piśacas	club, cakra	molasses	gāndhāra	pūrṇacandra	karkarī	kaṭibandhanam
Prāṇigarbha	at foot of siddha	swan	-	2 eyes 4 arms spotless white dress	leader of siddhas	bow, arrow	light	niṣāda	megha	jhiṇginī	maṇḍalam
Ananta	on kūrma	tortoise	white splendour	2 eyes 4 arms snakehood darkblue dress	lord of pannagas	plough, javelin	sugar	gāndhāra	varāḷika	ananta	ketakam
Brahmā	at dhvajastambha in Indra diśa	royal swan	-	8 eyes 4 faces 4 arme	support of the world	akṣa sūtra water pot	earth smoke	niṣāda	ghaṇṭa	dhruva	kamalam
Indra Purandara	east	elephant	shining cloud	1000eyes 4 arms gold-kuśa dress + Sacidevi	lord over devas	vajra, hook	molasses	pañcama	nāṭa	sama	vilāsam
Agni Āgneyavyūha	fire-region	ram	very bright	3 eyes 4 hands gold-clad + Svāhā		flowing butter	butter	ṛṣabha	gauḷi	aṭa	sarvatobhadram
Yama Kṛtānta	in Yama region	buffalo	dark	3 eyes 4 arms white dress	leader of pitaras	stick, noose	seede	gāndhāra	daisikī	maṅgala	sarvatobhadram
Nirṛsati	in Nirṛsati region	piśāca	tawny-like	2 eyes 4 arms white dress	lord of rākṣasas	khēṭa, club	meat	ṣadja	deśākṣi	jaya	kamalavadvṛttam
Varuṇa	west	makara	white	2 eyes 4 arme	lord of waterborn	noose, hook	milky food	dhaivata	nāṭa	bhadra	kamalam
Vāyu Sadāgati	Vāyu region	dog	smoke	2 eyes 4 arms bright	leader of ever moving	pole, lance	stored food	ṣadja	śrīrāga	jhampa	pṛṣṭhakuṭṭimam
Kubera Dhanada	Soma region	man	shining white	4 arms + Devi in pale red	lord of yakṣas	fetters	rice boiled in milk	ṛṣabha	mohana	ananta	maṇḍalam
Īśānya Mṛtyumjaya	Īśa region	bull	shining white	3 eyes elephant ekin	leader of bhūtas	kapāla śūla spear	light	-	-	-	-

Graph 16: The ritual of *balidāna* performed during the *mahotsava*.[127]

Specific, 'topical' utsavas

Although no month should pass without the celebration of an *utsava* there is a great difference between the duration, complexity and grandeur of the many festivals that are held throughout the year. The *utsavas* which we discuss here all belong to the category of 'great' *utsavas* (*mahotsava*). As we have seen before, such festivals comprise several smaller *utsavas* that highlight the particluar aspect of mythological history of a god; these 'festivals within a festival' usually do not last longer than a single day. However, at certain times of the year a single constituent festival may rise to such

importance that the entire *utsava* derives its name from its particular topical content (like in the case of the festival of the float, *plavotsava*). In other instances a *mahotsava* may borrow its name from the season in which it is held (cf. *vasantotsava:* spring festival). Generally, *utsavas* are known only by these topical names; therefore we will give a number of examples of such festivals as found in the *Śrīpraśnasaṃhitā.*

Vasantotsava—spring festival (Ch. XXXVIII)

After the Lord has been installed in the *maṇḍapa* he is offered food and lustration. Then, drama (*nāṭya*) and song (*gāna*) are to be performed (s. 19). The mount of the god during this particular festival (held in the month of Vaikāci) is the elephant. When the god has returned to the *maṇḍapa* there should be dance by beautiful *dāsīs*, song by *gāyakas* and recitation of the *Ṛgveda* by the twice-born (s. 47). The *utsava* is concluded by reuniting the deity with the goddess in the inner of the temple.

Plavotsava—floating festival (Ch. IXL)

The evening that precedes the actual journey on the temple-float, is marked by a procession over the four roads around the temple (s. 17-19): "(The priest) should lead the god slowly, slowly over the roads; after the Lord has been hoisted on his mount (*vāhana*) he should offer him perfume, sesame oil, lamps and the accompaniment of all instrumentalists, *naṭas, nartakas, nartanas* and *gaṇikās.*" The next morning the Lord is taken by the elephant mount to the furthest *maṇḍapa* accompanied by the sound of musical instruments and the recitation of the Vedas. After elaborated preparations the god is installed on the float (*plava*) in the temple-tank (*teppakkuḷam*). The float is pulled round the tank three times, fully decorated with lamps and enlivened by instrumental music.

Jyeṣṭhasnapana utsava—festival of the best bath (Ch. XL)

ŚS considers many occasions suitable for the performance of this festival. In *sūtra* 34 we find a description of the task of the *ōtuvār:* "some sing divine *drāviḍa*-songs that have *rāga, tāla* and *svara,* while others sing *sāmans*" (Vedic hymns). In the morning Vāsudeva is awoken, in the presence of the devotees, by songs and praise of the snake that forms the couch on which the god is resting, by other songs and by dances and the performance of instrumental music.[128] After the regular, daily *pūjā*, the image is taken to the *maṇḍapa*—preceded by dance. There the Vedas are recited by the Brahmins, even gods—among whom Brahmā as the first—are present for this occasion, and *apsaras* and *gandharvas* dance on in the *nṛttamaṇḍapa* (dance-pavilion). After all offerings the god is finally returned to the *mūlasthāna* joining Sakti.

Kṛṣṇajanma mahotsava—great festival in honour of the birth of Krishna (Ch. XLI) During this festival Krishna is to be clad in white silk. S. 38ff.: Krishna should be pleased by the singing of swing-songs, by performances

of dance and instrumental music, and by *gāthās* and other Vaishnava songs sung by the best Vaishnavas. The daily ritual is followed by a procession on the peacock mount; this *pradakṣiṇa* is headed by musical instruments, dance, song and accompanied by the recitation of the Vedas. At the return of the deity to the temple, the *ghaṭadīpa* (pot-lamp) is to be shown.

Dolotsava—swing festival (Ch. XLV)

After the customary rituals the deity is placed on a swing while the recitation of the entire Veda (*Vedapārāyaṇa*) is going on. S. 37 advises to please the Lord by the performance of vocal music, blended with the sound of the *vīṇā* (lute) played by women of excellent beauty, and by several dances.

Dhanurmāsotsava—festival of the month of Mārkaḷi (Ch. XLVI)

This festival which is held in half December-half January promotes longevity and the attainment of *mokṣa* (liberation from rebirth). S. 3-4 depicts the god in an adorned seat, pleased by *gāthā* singing of the devotees,[129] by *stotras,* by dances and by vocal music. A *pradakṣiṇa* is conducted with the elephant-mount. The celebrations end when the god is again joined with Sakti in the sanctum.

Praṇayotsava—quarrel festival (Ch. XLVII)

Usually, this festival is referred to as part of the wedding festival of the god (*kalyāṇotsava*). The cause for the quarrel is the marriage of the god with one of his two wives; naturally, the 'other' goddess is angry with the Lord when he has just married her rival. Therefore, she refuses him entrance into the sanctum. He pleads outside at the closed door, seated on the elephant-mount; large groups perform instrumental music, many dances are shown and refreshements are offered by *gaṇikās.* Finally, the goddess allows the deity to enter. Before he joins her the *ghaṭadīpa* is waved in front of him.[130]

Kalhāra utsava—festival of the Kalhāra blossom (Ch. XLVIII)

This *utsava* is thought of as destroying all enemies, enlarging the kingdom and granting success in all wishes of both the gods and the beings of all worlds. Several months are considered suitable for its performance. S. 22-3: " The priest should invoke Sakti in the *upakumbhas* through *mantras,* then, having offered food in the form of *pāyasanna,*[131] he should cast *bali;* the conch and trumpets, dance and song, recitation of mantras[132] should precede in the company of Vaishnavas". He should take *kalhāra* blossoms and throw them on a golden plate.[133] A procession around the village follows, headed by the *kumbha.* Then, the 'Lord of the world, the Puruṣottama' who is clad in yellow and bedecked with *kalhāra* blossoms, is taken on the elephant-mount to the *mūlasthāna* for the reunion with the goddess.

c. Informant accounts

Smt. P. Raṅganāyakī, b. 1961, *former devadasi in Śrī Subrahmaṇyasvāmi temple of Tiruttani (Tamilnadu)*

Among the accounts of the festival ritual by several devadasi informants the data supplied by this informant are the most extensive; they enable us to reconstruct the traditional participation in festival ritual throughout the year, month and days of specific *utsavas*. This reconstruction has been possible only because of the exceptional generosity and rich family tradition of the informant. Smt. P. Raṅganāyakī who served in the Tiruttani temple since her marriage and dedication to the god Murukaṉ at the age of seventeen. She performed the traditional temple repertoire as taught to her by her grandmother Smt. Subburatnamma. Her experience, expertise and repertoire constitute the most complete account of the devadasi participation in *utsava* ritual ever published so far.[134]

Yearly programme

Taī mācam: Brahmotsava, lasting ten days; its higlight is formed by the wedding of Śrī Murukaṉ with Vaḷḷi. As we will discuss the entire *Brahmotsava* further on, we will refrain here from details concerning the role of devadasis in this festival.

Māci mācam: Mahāśivarātri ('great night of Siva'). It is thought that this night indicates the period of great destruction (*pralaya*) for which Siva is held responsible. At that time his spouse, Pārvatī, worshipped Siva and prayed that the *jīvas* (living souls) who remain in space like particles of gold dust hidden in a lump of wax during the period of *pralaya,* should be blessed by him in the new day-period (*sṛṣṭi*) if they would worship Siva like she herself did; the prayer was granted and, accordingly, mortals worship Siva during *Mahāśivarātri*, remembering Pārvatī's prayer and realising the true course of cosmic reality. Those who observe *Mahāśivarātri* should take only a single meal during the previous day, sleep in a ritually clean place, bathe in sacred water of the Kaveri river, and then go to the temple to witness the worship. They should wake through the night of the festival.[135] In Tiruttani *Mahāśivarātri* was celebrated by offering Siva ablutions from 1008 *kalaśas* (water-pots); the devadasis would sing a *cūrṇikai* for this occasion (see p. 161 ff.). Another festival was held in this month: *Dhavanotsava* (*?*) which lasted for three days. At this occasion the ritual of *sarva vādyam* would be offered. *Sarva vādyam* ('all instruments') included, ideally speaking, all instruments, all vocal and dance compositions. During this festival the offering of *tālāṭṭu* (cradle songs) was an important composition in the *sarva vādyam* (cf. p. 163 ff.).

Paṅkuṇi mācam: Paṅkuṇi Uttiram. In Tiruttani this festival was not celebrated in an elaborate manner, and no specific compositions are dedicated to it. In places like Madurai, Tiruvarur and Kanchipuram the *Paṅkuṅi Uttiram* festival is considered very important. In Madurai, the wedding

of goddess Mīnākṣī with Siva is celebrated, whereas in Kanchipuram the festival is held to recollect *Kāma dahana* (the burning of Kāma).[136]

Cittirai mācam: Brahmotsava, lasting ten days. This festival differs from the *Brahmotsava* held in the month of Tai only in one detail: the god Murukaṉ marries the (less popular) goddess Devasenā instead of the goddess Vaḷḷi. The wedding ceremonies are not as elaborate as in the case of *Vaḷḷi kalyāṇotsava* (the 'constituent' festival of Vaḷḷi's wedding, see further on. p. 137). However, after Śrī Murukaṉ's marriage to Devasenā, Vaḷḷi does express her anger through a quarrel song (*Vaḷḷi katavaittiṟakkum*) sung by the devadasis: Murukaṉ requests Vaḷḷi to open the door of her shrine. Finally, after a very spicy dialogue the door is opened (cf. p. 161-2).

Vaikāci mācam: Vasantotsava (spring festival) lasting ten days. During this festival the devadasis took part in the offering of *sarva vādyam* and sang a vocal composition (beginning with the words *Sarasamuki*) to welcome the lord to the *Vasantotsava,* and a *kīrtanā 'Pāhi mām Śaravaṇabhava'.*

Āṇi Mācam: No *utsavas* of importance are performed during this month.

Āṭi mācam: Teppotsava (floating festival) lasting three days. The god will be installed on the large float belonging to the temple and will be pulled around in the temple-tank by man-power. Traditionally, the float will complete three rounds: during the first the *periyamēḷam* ('big band', consisting mainly of the *nāgasvara* players) will perform on the float, then the *ciṉṉamēḷam* ('small band', comprising the devadasis and their accompanying musicians and dance-master), and as the last the 'band' would play ('band' we should understand as a Western style band, playing Western music on Western instruments).[137] The performance of the *ciṉṉamēḷam* group involved usually a number of devadasis who would dance *kōlāṭṭam* choreographical patterns; these were mostly set to Western style tunes, and even the dance-patterns resembled such dances as an English waltz or a menuet.[138]

Āvaṇi mācam: The usual monthly programme would be followed without any special addition (see further p. 133).

Puraṭṭāci mācam: Navarātri: Festival of nine nights of worship of the goddess in her various aspects; a watch would be held for the goddess Durgā. On the tenth day (*Vijayadaśamī,* the victorious tenth) all devadasis belonging to temples under authority of the king of Karvetinagar, would have to go to his palace and take part in the rituals performed for him. At this occasion the devadasis would dance the regular 'concert' repertoire (*catir kaccēri*) in the palace.[139]

Aippaci mācam: Dīpāvali (festival of lights). This festival did not require any specific dance or vocal composition in addition to those that were generally performed by devadasis. *Dīpāvali* is celebrated to commemorate the destruction of the *asura* (anti-god) Narakāsura by Sri Krishna. The new-moon day which follows immediately the *Dīpāvali* day is called *Dīpāvali amāvāsyā.* The occasion is considered to be specially favourable to

propitiate the forefathers (*pitaras*) and hence libations of water with sesamum or gingelly seed are offered to them accompanied by the appropriate *mantras*.[140]

Kārttikai mācam: Skandaṣaṣṭhī (Festival of the sixth day of the bright fortnight). In fact, *Skandaṣaṣṭhī* could be observed every month, since the number six is considered to be very sacred to Skanda-Murukaṉ.[141] However, in the month of Kārttikai it is celebrated with great pomp since it commemorates Skanda's victory over the *asura* Śūrapadma.[142] The devadasis used to sing the *cūrṇikai* that was sung as well during the *Mahāśivarātri* festival, and a composition called *Ṣaṇmukha aṣṭakam.*

Mārkaḻi mācam: Although there are a number of *utsavas* that can be celebrated with great *éclat,* the devadasis of Tiruttani did not contribute any special composition to the performance of these festivals. During the month of Mārkaḻi, the *Mēlukolupu* song *Elimitōḍu* should be sung every morning at 4.00 A.M. by devadasis.[143]

Monthly programme

None of the *utsavas* that belonged to the monthly routine received any elaborate treatment; and exception was made for the *Ammaṉ utsava* for which the devadasis used to sing *Vaḷḷi maṅgalam, Ammavāri praharīlu* and *Ammavāri eccarikai.*[144]

1. *Pradoṣa utsava:* an *utsava* to commemorate the day that Nandi (Siva's mount, the bull) obtained *mokṣa* (liberation from the necessity of rebirth).

2. *Amāvāsyā utsava:* an *utsava* to mark the new moon.

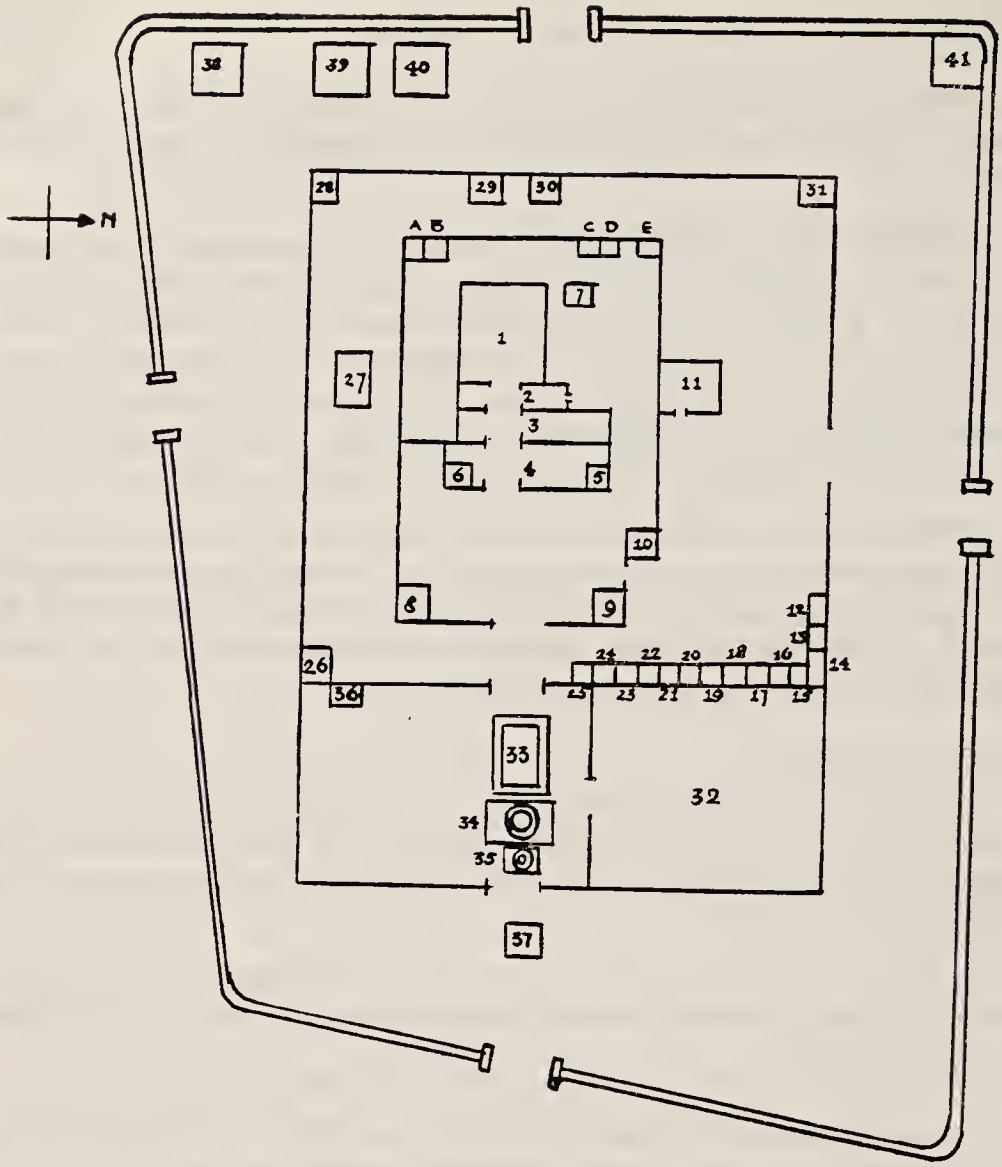
3. *Ammaṉ utsava:* held every Friday, since Fridays (*veḷḷikkiḻamai*) are considered very sacred to the goddess, and generally auspicious.

4. *Viśākhā nakṣatra utsava:* an *utsava* to mark the star '*Viśākhā.*

5. *Bharaṇī* or *Kṛttikā nakṣatra utsava:* an *utsava* to mark the stars *Bharaṇī* and *Kṛittikā.* For this occassion the peacock-mount (*mayil vāhana*) should be employed.

Utsava programme

As an example of a full-fledged *utsava* we have selected the *Brahmotsava* that is celebrated in the month of Tai (January-February). The festival lasts ten days and is very popular in Tiruttani because it includes the marriage of the god Murukaṉ with Vaḷḷi, the second wife of Murukaṉ, whom he married in conclusion of a thrilling love story.[145] After we have given a survey of the ten-day *utsava,* we will examine a 'regular' *utsava*-day, and, finally, render special attention to the day when the divine marriage takes place (*kalyāṇotsava*). As our informant referred to several *loci* of devadasi performance, we include the groundplan of Tiruttani temple.



1. Mūlavar Skanda-Murukaṉ
2. antarāḷam (middle room)
3. ardha maṇḍapa
4. sthāpana maṇḍapa
5. Devasenā
6. Vaḷḷi
7. Cumatti īśvara
8. Karuvūlam (hidden treasure)
9. Bhairavi
10. Utsava mūrtis
11. Kumbharīśvara

A Srī Mūlasthāna īśvara
B Kalatti īśvara
C Bāla Subrahmaṇya
D Kailāsa Nātha
E Paḷḷiyaṟai

12. Yāgaśāla
13. Āṟumukha(utsavamūrti)
14. Vināyaka, Aruṇakirinātha, navavīra
15. Vīrapattirar
16. Vīratīraṉ
17. Vīrāntakaṉ
18. Vīramārttāṇṭaṉ
19. Vīrarākṣasa
20. Vīrapurāntaraṉ
21. Vīramaheśvara
22. Vīramahendra
23. Vīrakeśari
24. Vīrabāhu
25. Sūryamūrti
26. Maṭapaḷḷi
27. Ekāmbara
28. Ardhanāri
29. Aruṇācala
30. Āṟumukar
31. Cantaṉa maṇḍapa
32. Vāhana maṇḍapa
33. Airāvata
34. Kātarkkōti maram (dhvajastambha)
35. Balipīṭha
37. Karpura akāṇṭam
38. Śiva temple
39. maṇḍapa
40. Ucci piḷḷaiyār
41. maṇḍapa
42. vāhana maṇḍapa
43. Kalyāṇa maṇḍapa

nos. 42 and 43 are situated on the route that is followed by the temple chariot

Graph 17: Groundplan of the Śrī Subrahmaṇya temple in Tiruttani (Tamilnadu)

Brahmotsava—Tai mācam

During seven days of this ten-day festival the god is offered a procession (*pradakṣiṇa*) on a 'grand' mount (*vāhana*). This procession around the temple is arranged in the morning and evening.

Day 1: *dhvajārohaṇa*—Hoisting the festival banner. No procession on a *vāhana* is held on this day.

Day 2: *pradakṣiṇa* on moonlight-mount (*candraprabhā vāhana*) in the morning and on spirit-mount (*bhūta vāhana*) in the evening.

Day 3: Morning—procession on ram-mount (*pōtteli vāhana*); evening *pradakṣiṇa* on lion-mount (*siṃha vāhana*). The participation of devadasis in these processions is so far 'as usual' (*māmūl*) for *utsava* ritual.

Day 4: In the morning the god travels in palanquin (*pallakkivāhana*) and in the evening on the snake-mount (*nāga vāhana*). The latter procession includes the performance of *kōlāṭṭam* dances by devadasis.

Day 5: The swan-mount (*haṃsa vāhana*) serves the god during the morning *pradakṣiṇa*. The procession that is held in the evening stops at the palace of the king. The god who is seated on the silver peacock-mount (*veḷḷimayil vāhana*) and the king enjoys a regular concert-dance program (*catir kaccēri*) performed by the devadasis. After an introductory composition called *Ciṉṉamēḷaprāpti* ('luck' for the *ciṉṉamēḷa*, i.e., dancer and accompanyists) that starts with the words *Jaya Jānakiramaṇa* (Long live, the one pleasing to *Jānaki*, i.e., Long live Rāma) another introductory, auspicious song (*maṅgala*) is sung: *Maṉṉāru devuniki*.... Only after these vocal compositions the first dance can be performed. The order of dance compositions is remarkable: *alārippū, śabda, jatisvaram, varṇam,* a few Kṣetrayyā *padams* and *tillāṉā*.[146] Generally, this performance would take place in the great *prakāra* round the temple.[147]

Day 6: It seems that the time for *pradakṣiṇa* was shifted to the evening and night. The first procession would be by means of the tiger-mount (*puli vāhana*) and would not require any special attention of the devadasis. In the night, however, the god would appear on the elephant-mount (*yāṉai vāhana*). The procession would stop again in front of the king's palace and the devadasis would perform a small dance-drama called *Kāmaṉ Kūttu*. One devadasi was to enter first, dressed like Kāma (the god of love), complete with bow and a fruit (*umatti kāy*)[148] for arrows. After an introductory verse announcing the advent of Kāma (*Oṃ Oṃ Oṃ Śiva Śiva Śiva Ṣaṇmukha Vēlā,.....*), the girls whom Kāma is supposed to torture by inflicting his love-intoxication enter one by one performing pure-dance steps on the dance-syllables: *ta ta takiṇom, ta tiki naṅka tom, tōti ye naṅka tom, naṅka toṅkā, ta jēn ta, take jēn tey, jeṛ kutu takitu diku tu, ta jom, tatiṅkiṇatōm*.[149] When all are assembled a dialogue ensues between Kāma and the girls who complain about his treacherous behaviour and express their love-longing. This dialogue is mimed by both parties in *abhinaya*

(facial and gestural mime) without any dance-steps.[150] The merriment increases with the throwing of turmeric water.

Day 7: The entire day is taken by the performance of the *Rathotsava,* the circumambulation of the god seated on the temple-chariot (*ratha*). Smt. P. Raṅganāyakī did not state any details.

Day 8: In the morning the god goes to the temple at the foot of the hill on *yāḷi vāhana* (a fabulous animal that resembles a lion), in the evening Śrī Murukaṉ returns on horse-back (*aśva vāhana*) and marries Vaḷḷi. This wedding festival (*kalyāṇotsava*) will be dealt with later (see p. 137ff.)

Day 9: *Mahābhiṣeka*—The great ablutions of the deity is started. No grand processions are arranged for this day. The regular, small-scale daily *utsava* (*nityotsava*) is concluded by the rendering of the songs *Dēvudaura, Cūrṇikai* and *Ṣaṇmukha aṣṭakam* by devadasis.

Day 10: On this day the banner is lowered with no pomp whatsoever. This concludes the *Brahmotsava* of *Tai mācam.*

Utsava Day-Programme

4.00 A.M. — no tasks for the devadasis

7.00 A.M. — *abhiṣeka* and at ca. 8.00 A.M. *dīpārādhanā.* During *utsava*-days a devadasi should wave the pot-lamp (*kumbhadīpa*) in the morning, too.

10.00 A.M. — 11.00 A.M.: *pradakṣiṇa* on a festive mount. In grandmother's time (Smt. Subburatnammā) devadasis had to accompany the procession and perform 'showing hands' at the several *balipīṭhas* around the temple; the dance-master seems to have said something like *ta tēy tēy tat'.*[151]

6.00 P.M. — *abhiṣeka* and at ca. 7.00 P.M. *dīpārādhanā* in which devadasis participated singing *puṣpāñjali ślokas* with or without dance for several deities while another devadasi would show the *kumbhadīpa.*

8.00 P.M. — *pradakṣiṇa* on another mount (*vāhana*). Formerly, devadasis performed their 'show of hands' at this occasion, too. In Smt. P. Raṅganāyakī's time the participation of devadasis had been reduced to receiving the processional group back into the temple with *eccarikais* and *maṅgalas.* These songs would be sung while the deity would be placed in the *vāhana maṇḍapa* to undergo all purificatory ceremonies, like *dṛṣṭiparihāra* (removal of evil eye). When the god would go through the great door (*mahādvāra*) back into the sanctum, the devadasis would sing the *eccarikā Śrīkāra sundaragātra*....

10.00 P.M. — As the deity is taken to the bedchamber the devadasis could sing any devotional song on the Lord. Once he would be installed on the couch with the Devī, *lāli pāṭṭus* and *ūñjal* songs were sung by the devadasis.

This concludes the ordinary routine for devadasis in *utsava* celebrations. However, some days during the 10-day festival would require a more elabo-

rate participation. As an example we have chosen the eighth day of the *Brahmotsava* held in the month of Tai, which highlights the wedding of Murukaṉ and Vaḷḷi.

Vaḷḷiyammaṉ Kalyāṇotsava

1.00-2.00 A.M.—Śrī Murukaṉ circumambulates the temple on the *yāḷi vāhana* to descend to the temple of his'elder brother' at the foot of the hill on which his own temple is built.[152] He takes permission to marry Vaḷḷi. The Irulas claim that Vaḷḷi belongs to their tribe; therefore they bring bridal presents and they themselves celebrate a number of marriages at this occasion.[153] Wedding presents are given by them and carried by the devadasis who act as bridal maids.

5.00 P.M.—The *muhūrta* (auspicious moment for tying the wedding necklace called *tāli*). However, first, Murukaṉ should steal into the house of his beloved, elope with her, and, finally, pay his respects to Vaḷḷi's foster parents (who are members of the Irula tribe). When the entire myth of Murukaṉ's courtship of Vaḷḷi has been re-enacted, the couple leaves for the mountain on the horse mount (*aśvavāhana*). The wedding takes place in the *kalyāṇamaṇḍapa* while some devadasis sing *śobhaṇam* songs, others wave the fly-whisks (*cāmara*)[154] and the *nāgasvara* players perform their traditional wedding compositions.[155]

6.00 P.M. — When the marriage has been completed Murukaṉ returns inside the temple and finds the shrine of his first wife, Devasenā, closed. The devadasis now voice the quarrel between the two spouses by singing the *Devasenā katavuttiṟakkum* song (see p. 261-2). Finally the Devi is willing to have the door of her shrine opened.

When peace has been re-established a very elaborate and festive *dīpārādhanā* offering is held for both the *utsavamūrti* (processional image) and the *mūlavar* (main, immovable image) at the same time. This is done by arranging mirrors in such a way that both are visible. The plates on which the lights are offered are decorated in a manner that is unique for this festival:

Graph 18: lamp-plate for *dīpārādhanā* in the evening of *Vaḷḷiyammaṉ Kalyāṇotsava*[156]

This 'grand' lustration which is at the same time a most powerful means of removing *dṛṣṭi* (evil, envious eye) concludes this very popular festival.

Although, structurally speaking, the wedding of Devasenā and Śrī

Murukaṉ in the month of Cittirai (April-May) could claim a similar amount of elaboration, it used to be performed 'without much work' for the devadasis.

Tiruvarur tradition

Informants: Śrī S. Celvakaṇapati, Śrī T.S. Letchappa, Śrī T. Naṭarājasundara Piḷḷai, Śrī V. Naṭeśa, Smt. P.R. Thilagam

Inspite of the fact that Tiruvarur has been one of the most important centres in South India, of music and dance culture, and of temple arts in particular, it has not been possible so far to reconstruct the participation by devadasis in the festival ritual to the same extent that was achieved with regard to the Tiruttani tradition.

The sources for the present attempt at a reconstruction have been rather diverse: on the one hand, we have the account of the last (known) devadasi of the Tiruvarur tradition, Smt. P.R. Thilagam,[157] and of a number of *nāgasavara* players, Śrī V. Naṭeśa, Śrī T. Naṭarājasundara Piḷḷai, Śrī T.S. Letchappa and Śrī S. Celvakaṇapati,[158] who accompanied the devadasis in the performance of their artistic and ritual tasks; on the other hand, we have the evidence found in the artistic heritage of this temple. Two 'operatic ballets' have remained from the repertoire that was performed by the devadasis within the structure of the temple ritual: *Pallaki seva prabandham* and *Tiyākeśar kuṟavañci*.[159] Both contain invaluable information about the artistic profile of the repertoire of the devadasis as well as about the rituals performed in the temple. A second source of information is the tradition of *nāgasvara* music performed in *naimittikārcanā*. The interviews with several *nāgasvara* musicians and the account of their family-repertoire yielded many data concerning the participation by devadasis in the rituals. In a manuscript belonging to the family of Śrī T.S. Letchappa we find references to the following *varṇams* to be played on *nāgasvara* in accompaniment of the dance-performance of a devadasi: 1. *Ī virahavētaṉa, rāga śrī, tāla āti;* 2. *varṇam* in *rāga asāvēri,* no *tāla* given; 3. *Niṉṉu kōri,* no details; 4. *Sāmi niṉṉu kōri,* no details; 5. *Viripōṇi, rāga kalyāṇi,* no *tāla* given; 6. *Kalikarō, rāga kēdāram, tāla āti;* 7. *Sāmini, rāga kalyāṇi, tāla cāpu;* 8. *varṇam* in *śaṅkarābharaṇa rāga, āti tāla;* 9. *varṇam* in *kalyāṇi rāga.*[160] These *varṇams* were danced to the accompaniment of the *nāgasvara* without a vocal rendering of the text. The same holds for a large number of *padams* (Ta. *patam,* Skt. *pada*) that are found in the same manuscript; in many cases only the details of *rāga* and *tāla* are given, in other examples the text is supplied, also. Among the composers we find the name of Pāpavināśa Mudaliar (18th century); his *kīrttaṉai Umakku prīti* in *ūceni rāga, āti tāla* was played and mimed on the first day of the *Brahmotsava* (see p. 142-5).[161] Some of the *padas* have a text which is beautifully poetic, whereas other *padas* are straightforwardly and crudely erotic.[162] Apart from these well-known genres of dance-compositions we find mention of *Śivāṣṭapadis* in the *rāgas mōhana, bilahari, ānanda bhairavī* and *ahiri,* of

Tiru-ṛg-kuṛal in *rāga kuṛiñci*,[163] of *Nēricai* songs,[164] and of the well-known vocal compositions belonging to the repertoire of the devadasis, like *eccarikai, naluṅku, ūñjal, lāli, kappal pāṭṭu* (i.e., *ōṭam*), *nōṭṭu svara sāhityas;* in addition a composition called *Koccakam*[165] is referred to as well as another *nāṭakam* (dance-drama): *Mīnākṣī nāṭakam.* At this stage of research it is not yet clear to what extent the devadasis participated in the performance of this repertoire. However, further investigation of the *nāgasvara* tradition and search for devadasis whose family tradition is connected with this temple may render a more complete survey.

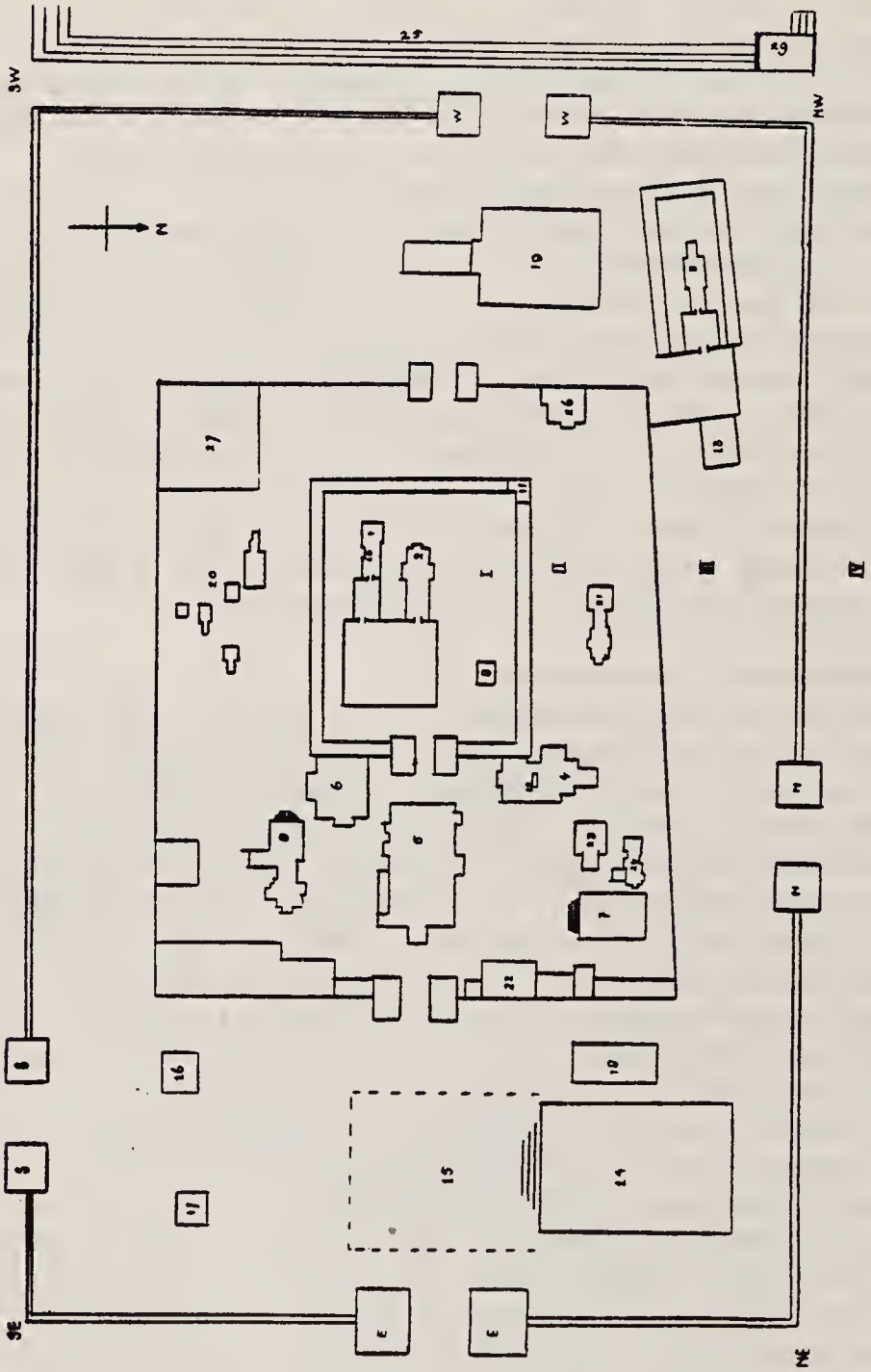
The third layer of the artistic heritage of Tiruvarur that can supply information about the role of the devadasis in the temple ritual are the compositions by Muttusvāmī Dīkṣitar. Smt. P.R. Thilagam claims that Dīkṣitar *kritis* were sung by devadasis as part of their ritual tasks; she sang, as an example, *Tyāgarājaya namaste* in *rāga begada* and *tāla rūpaka.*[166] This great classical composer has left sets, or rather, cycles, of *kritis* and *kīrtanās* on several deities of the Tiruvarur temple : twelve *kritis* on Śrī Tyāgarājasvāmī, nine *kīrtanās* on the goddess Kamalāmbikā, nine *kritis* on goddess Nilotpalambā, *kritis* in praise of the sixteen Gaṇapatis, and five *kritis* on the five *liṅgas* found in Tiruvarur temple.[167] It is not clear in how far these compositions belonged to the repertoire of the devadasis; several of them, however are performed even today by the *nāgasvara* musicians.

Reconstruction of yearly programme

Tai mācam : Taippūcam festival. The T.S. Letchappa manuscript (LM) provides us with the following details concerning the festival procession. The deity who is offered a *pradaksiṇa* on a chariot is Paraśurāmasvāmī. As the deity is taken towards the chariot, the musicians should play *paracu rāga* till the Vimōcaṉar *pantal* (shed of 'the one who bestows deliverance'). From there till the Eastern *gopura* (temple tower) the *mēḷam* should play "the usual". From the *pantal* of the dancing Piḷḷaiyār *paracu rāga* should be played followed by *mallāri.*[168] Then proceeding towards the four-pillared *maṇḍapa*, a *pada* in *bhairavi rāga* and *aṭa tāla* should be performed, then the band should play as usual while moving to the eastern four-pillared *maṇḍapa*, progressing to the foot of the chariot (*ratha, tēr*); here, the procession should halt. When the pole (that releases the car) is moved the musicians should play *MMGM. PDPDSN. DDP*; at the *muhūrta* (auspicious moment) of setting the chariot into movement the song *Śiva Śiva Śiva pāhi mām* should be heard, and the *śuddhasāvēri varṇam* is to be performed. Turning to the palace corner[169] a *pada* in *rāga dhanyāśrī* and *tripuṭa tāla* should be played; the same *dhanyāsrī rāga*, now in *miśra tāla* is played for the *pada Intirō vā* when the procession turns to the North at the West corner of the temple-tank, *Kamalālaya.* Coming from the North and returning to the Eastern road a *kīrttaṉam* in *punnāgavarāḷi rāga* completes the *pradakṣiṇa.*

The *Taippūcam* festival and those that will be described on the following pages, can be followed to some extent on the groundplan of the Tiruvarur

temple that has been given below. However, many festivals make use of *pantals* that are erected for the duration of the festival only; therefore it has not been possible to depict such booths on the groundplan of the temple.



Graph 19 : Groundplan of Śrī Tyāgarājasvāmī temple, Tiruvarur

1. Śrī Tyāgarājasvāmī shrine
2. Śrī Vaṇmikanātha shrine
3. Śrī Kamalāmbāḷ shrine
4. Śrī Nilotpalāmbaḷ shrine
5. *Rājanārāyaṇa maṇḍapa*
6. *Taṭṭuccuṛṛi maṇḍapa*
7. *Vasanta maṇḍapa*
8. Śrī Acaleśvara shrine
9. Śrī Caṇḍikeśvara shrine
10. door from shrine into first *prakāra*
11. Śrī Naṭarāja in cloistered verandah
12. swing (*ūñjal*)
13. *maṇḍapa* for music offerings to Śrī Kamalāmbāḷ
14. *Devāśṛiya maṇḍapa*
15. Thousand pillared *maṇḍapa* (now columns only)
16. *ūñjal maṇḍapa*
17. *Bhaktākṣi maṇḍapa*
18. *Sankha* and *tīrtha*
19. *Sabhāpati maṇḍapa*
20. *Aṭakeśvara*
21. *Viśvakarmeśvara*
22. Store-room
23. *Yāgaśāla*
24. *Siddhīśvara*
25. temple-tank *Kamalālaya*
26. Anandeśvara
27. Garden with *sthalavṛksa* (local sacred tree)
28. Palace corner
29. Śrī Vināyaka

I first *prakāra*
II second *prakāra*
III third *prakāra*
IV main street, processional route
E east *gopura*
S south *gopura*
W west *gopura*
N north *gopura*

Photograph 1 : *Periya mēḷam* in Naṭarāja-*utsava* (*Ārudra Darśana*)

Paṅkuṉi mācam : Paṅkuṉi uttiram Brahmotsava. This festival lasts 27 days and abounds in the performance of *padas*, *varṇams* and other compositions that are related to the repertoire of the devadasis. It is also one of the two ritual occasions during the entire year when the god is shown dancing the *ajapa naṭaṉam;* this peculiar feature will be dealt with later, in the context of the *Ārudra darśana* festival in the month of Mārkaḻi (December-January). At this point we will discuss only three days in greater detail; all informants agreed about the performance of dance by devadasis on the 13th, 15th and 18th day of the festival, although the *LM* manuscript indicates a far larger share of devadasi participation in the ritual.

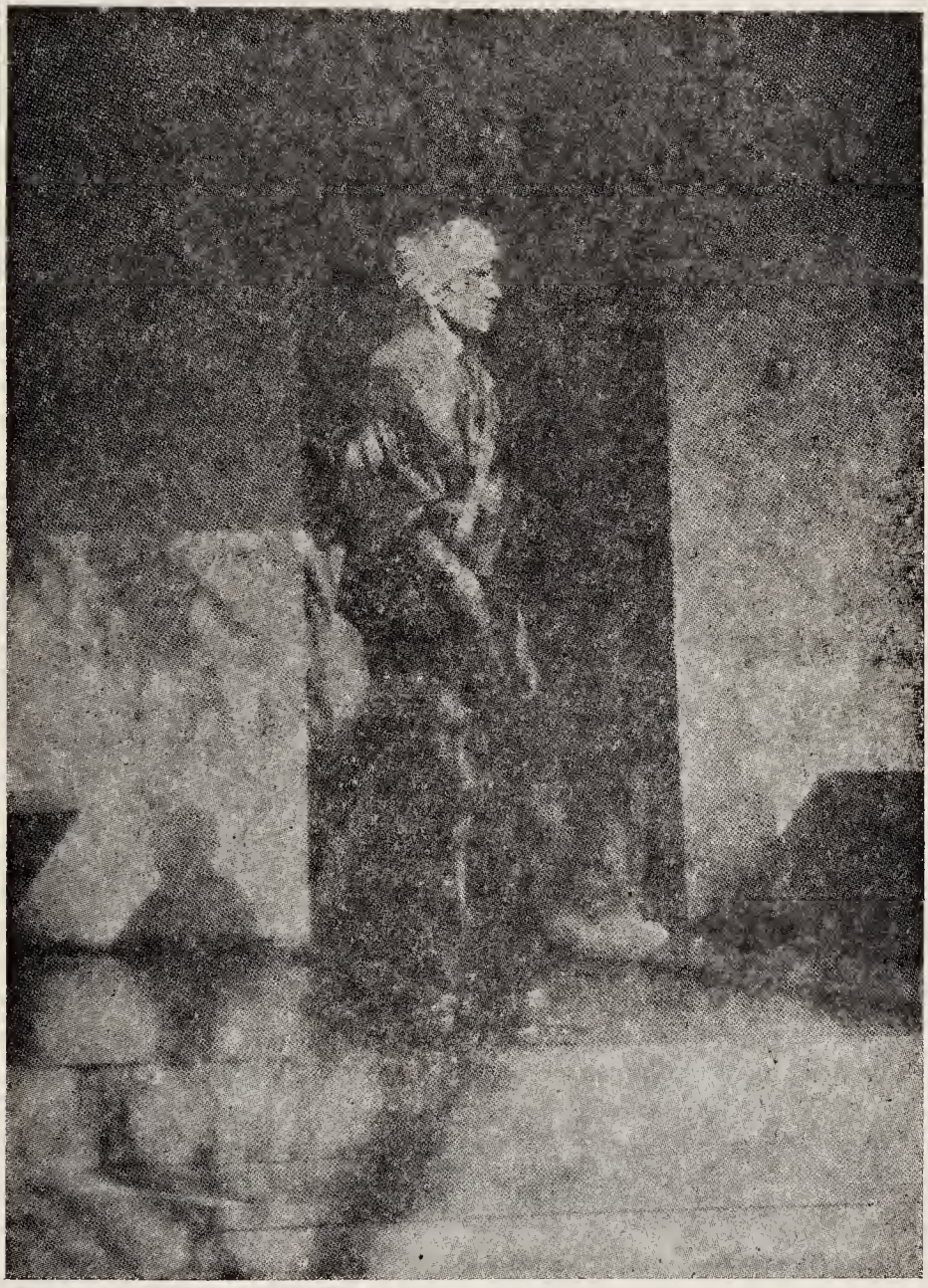
Day 13 : Procession on the bull-mount (*ṛṣabha vāhana*). According to Śrī V. Naṭēśa the procession would halt in front of the 'king's palace' for two hours to enable the devadasis to perform *varṇams*, *jatisvarams*, *padas* and *tillāṉās*. The *LM* manuscript mentions a *varṇam* in *asāvēri rāga*, *āti tāla*, *Ī viraha*, a Dīkṣitar *kriti* in *rāga āṭānā*, *Tyāgarāja pālaya*,[170] another *varṇam* in *rāga śaṅkarābharaṇa* (no *tāla* given), *Colla vārāy cēti Cuntaramāṉa miṉṉē*, and *aṣṭapadi* in *rāga āhiri*.[171]

Day 15 : Procession on the temple chariot (*ratha, tēr*). The temple chariot of Tiruvarur is famous for its size and the fine workmanship both from the architectural and sculptural point of view.[172] To organise one *rathotsava* is a task that can rarely be realised nowadays. The ritual demands a full day and involves the assistance of the entire staff of temple personnel, trustees, and a great number of lay people. Whenever the *rathotsava* is held it draws attention from far and wide.

In the morning of the *rathotsava*, *rāga bhūpala* is performed, *miśragati, tisragati, sarvalaghu* is played,[173] the *kaṭṭalai pada* in *tripuṭa tāla*, and the *kīrtanā Tyāgarāja vaibhogame* in *miśra tāla*. The *aṣṭapadi* with the *svaras MGPDSS* is rendered in *bilahari rāga*. At this point the deity is lifted on a wooden platform to which two large brass poles are attached. The method of fixing the platform to the poles is secret and known only to the family of *uṭkaṭṭalai* trustees (trustees of internal management). They effect the solid fastening while hidden under a large sheet. When the sheet is removed the devotees are ready to lift the structure carrying the deity. Under loud shouts of "*Tyāgeśa, Tyāgeśa*!" They move from the ante-chamber of Śrī Tyāgarāja's shrine through the side-door into the inner *prakāra*. At this point the musicians may play a *pada* in *pantuvarāli rāga*, *āti tāla* and a *pada* in *asāveri rāga*, *āti tāla*. En route the deity dances the *ajapa naṭaṉam*.

After this group has arrived at the chariot, the deity is installed on the *ratha*. Before the god starts his circumambulation of the temple on his chariot, he wants first to receive an offering of flowers from the hand of the devadasi of the *koṇṭiparamparai*. Even in our times Smt. P.R. Thilagam presents herself for this occasion in Tiruvarur.[174] She should wear the ritual headcloth (*parivaṭṭam*) and be in a ritually clean state. As a ritual fee for her services she receives a *parivaṭṭam*, a portion of the food offered to the god which is called *koṇṭinaivētyam* for this occasion, kumkumam, holy ash and black

paste. The wearing of a *parivaṭṭam* is a great privilege, and is demonstrated by Smt. P.R. Thilagam below. Her family has also the right to fan the deity with the peacock-feather *cāmara* while he travels on his chariot.



Photograph 2 : Smt. P.R. Thilagam wearing the ritual headcloth (*parivaṭṭam*) for the occasion of offering flowers to Śrī Tyāgarājā before his departure on the temple-chariot.

Hereafter the deity has another demand before he is willing to start: he wishes to hear the *tēr-mallāri*, in *kaṇṭa gati, nāṭa rāga*, accompanied by the *koṭukoṭṭi* drum (see photograph 1) which Tyāgarāja is said to like very much.[175] The *kaṇṭa gati mallāri* is immediately followed by *kaṇṭa gati alārippū*.[176] While these instrumental compositions are played, the ropes are distributed and

the devotees get ready to start drawing the *ratha*. The car is set in motion while a *pada* with the *svaras N. PN.N.N.S.S.* is played in *tripuṭa tāla* followed by *PNNS. SS. NSMGS* in *tisra tāla*. When the chariot has arrived at the corner, a log has to be taken out to enable the wheels to turn. This task is performed to the accompaniment of the *rāga śaṅkarābharaṇa* and the *veṇpā*[177] *ānārilaiyē āyaṇum Tirumālum kāṇāraṭi*....In this way, the manuscript prescribes innumerable details for the incessant musical accompaniment of the slow *pradakṣiṇa* on the chariot. At the third corner of the route around the temple, the car is temporarily halted. While *sāmans* are sung inside the car[178] and *abhiṣeka* (ablutions) is going on, the *Pallaki Seva Prabandham* is performed (also called *Pallaku nāṭakam*). At the fourth corner the usual devadasi compositions like *nalaṅku, ūñjal, lāli, ōṭam* (*kappal pāṭṭu*), *nōṭṭu svarams, aṣṭapadi, naṭupatti*[179] and *taṭṭam* are played. Thus the circumambulation by *ratha* comes to an end.

The deity is taken back into the outer *prakāra* of the temple and is installed in the middle of the thousand-pillared *maṇḍapa*. Now, the *tavil* drum, *koṭukoṭṭi* and *pakkavādya* drum should play to the accompaniment of *pantuvarāli rāga*. At this point the royal court is established. The Tiruvarur tradition calls the two 'circles of courtiers' the big *vaṭṭam* (circle) and a small *vaṭṭam*. The big *vaṭṭam* offers *ṣodaṣopacāra* (sixteen offerings)[180] among which the offering of light, *dīpārādhanā*, plays an important role. These *ṣodaṣopacāras* were imitated by the devadasis (*kaikkāṭṭum muṟai* 'tradition of showing hands'). The small *vaṭṭam* offers the performance of rāga *bauḷi* in *āti tāla* while the big circle offers *rāga nādanāmakriyā* in *jhampā tāla*, as well as *rāga karṇāṭaka kāpi*. Hereafter follows a *pada* in *etukulakāmbōji, Ūṭal poruḷ*. A number of musical compositions still follows: *Paḷḷaṉ tirai viruttam*, another *veṇpā*, and a *Paḷḷaṉ daru*; unfortunately, it is not possible to give a full account of the offerings of song and dance during the royal court in the thousand-pillared *maṇḍapa*, since eleven pages of the manuscript are missing. We may presume that the *rathotsava* ends with *mallāri, naṭuppatti* and the circling of *taṭṭams* (plates with fire) to establish *śubham* (happiness, fortune) in analogy with other days in the *Brahmotsava*.[181]

Day 18 : *Vasantotsava* (Spring festival): according to Śrī V. Naṭeśa, the *vasantotsava* included the performance of the dance-drama *Tiyāgēśar kuṟavañci* (also called *Tiruvārūr kuṟavañci*). However, this tradition ceased about one hundred years ago, and was replaced by the performance of a full-fledged dance-concert (*catir kaccēri*) in the *vasantamaṇḍapa*.

Āti mācam : ātippūram teppotsava (floating festival). Śrī V. Naṭeśa remembered that the float was pulled round the large temple-tank (*Kamalālaya*) three times. The first round would feature music by *nāgasvara*-players (*periya mēḷam*, or 'big band'). The *LM* gives the following detailed instructions: *śaṅkarābharana varṇam*, the composition '*Vāci vāci*' in *karṇāṭaka kāpi rāga*, the composition *Śrī Nilotpala nāyakī* in *rāga rītigauḷa*, and the *svaras GMPP. MPDN, kalyāṇi rāga, miśra gati* (but *tāla* is not given), *Māyavamē ivvuruvāy* in *sāmā rāga, tisra gati* (no *tāla*), and in *rāga āhiri, miśra gati* (no *tāla*) *Māya-*

vētiyara. In the second round the *ciṉṉameḷam* would enter the float. The devadasis and their accompanyists who constitute the small band would sing and dance the following compositions: *pūrṇacandrika rāga, yōgirāja etukulakāmbōji, Kamalāmbike* in *rāga tōṭi, Śrī Subrahmaṇya* in *rāga kāmbōji,* a *tillāṉā* in *rāga pūrvikalyāṇi* and a composition with the *svaras* SRSDS in *rāga mohaṇam*. Unfortunately, the LM manuscript does not give a more precise description of the type of compositions that were danced and sung to these *rāgas*. The last round of the float would give the singers of the *Tevāram*, the *ōtuvārs*, a chance to perform their art. No details about their selection of songs is known.[182]

Photograph 3 : Two *ōtuvārs* belonging to the Śrī Tyāgarājasvāmī temple of Tiruvarur.

Purattāci mācam : Niṟaipaṇi festival. According to Śrī V. Naṭeśa this festival is celebrated at the time of full moon in the month of *Purattāci* (September-October) as the occasion when Śrī Tyāgarājasvāmī grants a special audience (*darśan*) to Indra who lives in Tiruvarur as an untouchable due to a curse.[183] The temple is decorated in a special way for this festival: the entire corridor is covered with new clothes, vegetables and fruits as well as an elaborate arrangement of lamps. During this festival Tyāgarāja is

represented by his crown and sandals and as such taken in procession to the shrine of the goddess Nilotpalāmbāḷ. Both *ciṉṉanmuṟai* and *periyamuṟai* devadasis head this procession. They circumambulate the first *prakāra* and the second *prakāra*; reaching the shrine of Nilotpalāmbāḷ they dance *puṣpāñjali*. The palanquin that contains the holy crown and sandals, is taken inside the shrine of the goddess, and the divine pair is seated on a swing. The devadasis sing swing-songs (*ūñjal pāṭṭu*) while the god and goddess are gently rocked to sleep.

Mārkaḻi mācam: Ārudra darśana. This three-day festival is held in honour of the asterism *Ārudra* (*Alpha Orionis*). It is related to Siva in the form of *Śiva Naṭarāja* (Siva as king of the dancers). This form of Siva indicates his Rudra aspect of the cosmic destruction of all impure, gross forces by means of his cosmic dance that burns all impurities to retain only the purest substance, namely gold. It is not quite clear to what extent devadasis belonging to the Tiruvarur temple participated in this festival. We have evidence from other temples that the performance of *kautvams* for several deities played an important role. This eye-witness account will be quoted hereafter. When I witnessed the Ārudra celebrations in the temple of Tiruvarur in 1975, 1977, 1980 and 1982, I realised that the pattern described by Ti. A. Swaminatha Pillai could be applied to the Śrī Tyāgarājasvāmī temple as well, since the *nāgasvara* band still follows a similar processional routine. The most famous celebrations of the *Ārudra* festival, however, take place in Chidambaram which is supposed to be the centre of the Universe where Siva dances his cosmic dance.

The aspect for which Tiruvarur is famous is the pressional dance, the *ajapa naṭaṉam*, that is executed by the deity himself. According to a local legend, a Chola king called Mucukunta obtained a boon from Indra and wished to receive the image of Śrī Tyāgarājasvāmi which was reposing on the chest of the reclining Vishnu. Indra, however, tried to misguide the king and had six other images made; without fail, Mucukunta chose the right Tyāgarāja-image, and took it with him to Tiruvarur. The other six images were installed in Tirunallaru, Nagappatinam, Tirukkarayil, Tirukkolili, Tiruvaymur and Tirumaraikkadu, all situated in the Kaveri delta. All seven Tyāgarāja images are said to dance when taken out in procession. Actually, it is the bearers of the platform onto which the image is placed, who dance. It seems that small cushions on the four corners of the platform provide a structure with a 'spring arrangement' that can be carried by bearers. The dances performed in the sites quoted above are: *Ajapa naṭaṉam* (Tiruvarur): dance without chanting, resembling the dance of Śri Tyāgarāja resting on Vishnu's chest or the movement of *prāṇayāma* (Yogic breath control); *Uṉmatta naṭaṉam:* dance of an intoxicated person; *Parāvārataraṅga naṭanam*: dancing like the waves of the sea; *Kukkuṭa naṭaṉam:* dancing like a cock; *Bhṛṅga Naṭaṉam:* dancing like a bee that hovers over a flower, *Kamala naṭaṉam:* dance like a lotus that moves in the breeze, and *Haṃsapāda naṭaṉam*: dancing with the gait of a swan.[184] These dances might be connected

with the seven *cakras* through which *kuṇḍalinī* ascends (cf. p. 96).[185] All dances require a particular choreography and the accompaniment of the *śuddha mattaḷam* drum.

Although the following account does not refer to the ritual practices in Tiruvarur temple, it can easily be imagined as having taken place there, too. With slight modification of the names of the ritual *loci* we can follow the procession described below on the Tiruvarur groundplan. The procession of the god Naṭarāja on the morning of *Ārudra darśana* still follows the same processional route.

Ti. A. Swaminatha Pillai, Tiruvalaputtur temple; dance-master[186]

"On the day of Ardhra Darshanam, Lord Nataraja, the Lord of the Cosmic Dance, who is but another form of Lord Siva in the dance of Bliss (Ananda Tandava) will be brought to the [*taṭṭuccuṟṟimaṇḍapa*] Mandapa after the holy bath (Abhishekam) and decoration. There Naivedya will be offered to the Lord to the accompaniment of Meḷavadyam and Chamaram. After that Deepa Aradhana will be offered to the accompaniment of Melavadyam, Suddha Maddhalam, Talam and Mridangam. At the end of Alankara Deepam, two Rudrakannikas, one of whom has the first preferential right of the Kshetra, and the other who has to do the service for the day will come in Brahmin dress and together they dance by the show of hands to the accompaniment of Sarva Vadyam, especially to the tune of Suddha Maddhaḷam and Mridangam, when shodashopacaram is offered by the priest, etc. to the Lord. They will dance by the show of their hand in different ways, befitting the sixteen forms of offerings (shodashopacara). After the camphor light offering (Karpooram Arathi) is over, they will offer prayers with flowers, called Pushpanjali. Then, the Lord will be taken round the Prakara when the Big Melam (Periya Melam), i.e., Nagaswaram, will be played till it reaches the East Main Street outside the temple. From the middle of the East Main Street outside the temple. From the middle of the East Main Street, the Nattuvanars and those playing on Suddha Maddhalam and Mridangam, will, according to the tenets of Bharata Natya, perform Melaprapti which has already been explained. They will recite Chollukethu Stotras on Vinayaka, Subrahmanya, Iswara, Thyagaraja and Sundaramurthi. Afterwards upto the end of the South Main Street, they will recite jathis prepared in different talas and also jathi chollukethus called Thathakaras prepared in talas like Simhananda.[187] Then, in the whole of the West Main Street and the North Main Street, Mela Vadyakaras will play on the Nagaswaram, songs and padas of Muthu Thandavar, etc.[188] At the junction of North Street with East Street called Isanya Dik, Sivacharyas will recite slokas in praise of the Lord. After this the Oduvars will sing Tevara songs in praise of the Kshetra and the Lord. Then the Rudrakannikas will together sing Tevara songs of the Kshetras[189] at the end of which camphor light (Karpooram Arathi) will be offered and Vibhuti (holy ash) will be distributed. During the last stage of the procession, i.e., from the North end of the East Main Street to the middle,

the Rudrakannikas will sing Tevaras. When the procession reaches the middle of the East Main Street, just opposite the main Gopuram of the temple, the Amman (Goddess) will be separated from her Lord Nataraja and taken in an angry mood inside the temple. But their quarrel will be set right through the timely intervention of Sundaramurthi Swamigal, who will act as mediator. After the reunion Tirthavari will be performed.[190] Then Rudrakannikas bearing Thattu Deepas, Mridangists and Nattuvanars bearing talas, will go round Lord Nataraja and Sivakamasundari twice when the Sarva Vadya will be sounded. After this, the Sarva Vadya will be stopped and all the Rudrakannikas will either sing Pushpanjali or Mangalam to the accompaniment of Mridanga Tala. Then Rudrakannikas will complete the third round to the accompaniment of Tala and Maddhala. The procession will end with the offering of a camphor light after which, the deities will be taken to be installed in their original place when the Rudrakannikas will sing Ulas and Yachcharika [*Eccarikais*] in praise of the Kshetra. After their installation there will once again be a camphor light offering and the Rudrakannikas will return to their respective houses.

Until the third decade of this century, Nattuvanars and Rudrakannikas have been performing this holy service in their respective Kshetras (temples) where they had rights. My guru, Pandanallur Sri Meenakshi Sundaram Pillai and myself have been performing it in Pasupatheswarar Devasthanam and I myself have been doing it in Rathnapureeswarar Devasthanam in Thiru Val Boli Puthur which is my own place. Others have been doing this service in the respective Kshetras where they had rights."

Tiruvarur-monthly utsava programme

Every Friday an *Ammaṉ utsava* was held according to Smt. P.R. Thilagam. At this occasion songs from the *Pallaki Seva Prabandham* used to be sung by devadasis.

As a close of the survey of the Tiruvarur tradition we will examine the *Pallaki Seva Prabandham* in more detail. For our purpose, it is of twofold importance: on the one hand, it exemplifies the type of 'operatic ballets' that were performed during great festivals (like the *Brahmotsava*), and, on the other hand, the opera itself contains an artistic replica of the *pallaku sevā*, the offering of a palanquin. Especially this aspect of the story-content of the opera is relevant in the context of festival ritual.

The story of the *Pallaki Seva Prabandham* describes the event of Śaṅkara (here: Śrī Tyāgarājasvāmī) going in a palanquin (*pallaku*) to meet his divine spouse (here : Kamalāmbāḷ).[191] In it two analogies are at work: 1. the divine reunion of god and goddess is represented by the *pallaku sevā* ritual, and 2. the court that surrounds a god in the temple is created with divine prototypes: the temple personnel 'hears' itself reflected in the opera. In the court of Siva we find heavenly dancers, like Rambhā and Urvaśī; the *ṣoḍaśopacāra* are performed by the gods who attend upon Siva: Kubera gives betel-leaves and camphor, Vāyudeva causes a fragrant breeze, Brahmā utters praise,

Yama moves the fan (*cāmara*), and holds a sword and shield,[192] Varuṇa spreads white clothes, Candra holds the umbrella and banner, the Garuḍas, Kinnāras and Gandharvas sing in a high-pitched voice and beautiful, celestial girls dance. In this way the mortal officiants of the ritual may feel that their tasks are not only identical with the divine model but are even synonymous with it, and are therefore capable of factually reuniting Siva and Parvati, or male and female principle.

The text of the *Pallaki Seva Prabandham* gives a clear picture of the structure of the *pallaku sevā*, performed in the temples, as well as a great number of details concerning the food that should be offered (*naivedya*) and compositions that should be danced or sung. A schematic account, on the basis of the opera, is given below:

Companions discuss with Pārvatī
and go straight to Siva's court
to express their request for
reunion of the god and goddess

Siva is seated in court,
surrounded by his cortège
Finally, he takes notice
of the companions of Pār-
vatī, and orders a palanquin

The palanquin (*pallaku*) is set
in motion. Siva is accompanied
by his courtiers, *cāmara*, umbrella,
dhvaja, praise of Brahmā, song, dance
by celestials, *jaya*-shouts and *Eccarikai*
singing by the gods

Pārvatī, too, goes out to
meet Siva

Arrival in the bed-chamber (*paḷḷiyaṟai*)
where god and goddess are placed on a
swing (*ūñjal*). They are offered:

1. *ārati*
2. (*jaya*) *maṅgalam*
3. *naivedya*
4. *lāli*
5. *pavvalimpu sevā* (massaging the feet)
6. *eccarikai* and a night watch
7. *maṅgalam*

Smt. P.R. Thilagam is most probably the last living descendant of the Tiruvarur tradition who has inherited the practical knowledge of the performance of both operas: the *Pallaki Seva Prabandham* and the *Tiyāgeśar Kuṟavañci*.

Smt. B.N. Rājalakṣmī, former devadasi of the Oṭaiyavar temple, Madras

The account of Smt. B.N. Rājalakṣmī[193] is of vital importance in the sense that it shows the detrimental effect of urbanisation on the tradition of devadasi participation in the temple ritual. During her time, this participation had been reduced to a minimum. What remained from the rather glorious tasks performed by devadasis in Tiruttani and Tiruvarur, was the bare necessity of devadasi participation in festival ritual.

Perumāḷ utsava: After the procession, the deity returns to the sanctum; a plate (*taṭṭu*) is given to the devadasi and she performs *ārati,* then '*nilvisi baṭṭi*' (incense), water and camphor are offered. In this way evil eye is removed. Those dasis who have participated receive *prasādam* and an equal share of any remuneration that has been offered.

Garuḍa vāhana utsava: On the day that the mythical bird Garuda, the mount of Lord Vishnu, is used as processional vehicle, devadasis dance regular concert items on four places in the street. When the procession returns to the sanctum, devadasis sing *eccarikais* and the pot-lamp, plate-lamp, camphor and water are offered for removing evil eye.

Oṭaiyavar utsava: A festival held after *Vināyaka caturthī* (August-September). The same routine of offering the pot and plate-lamp is followed by the devadasis as well as the singing of *eccarikai* songs.

This account contains the total of her participation in the temple ritual. She was trained at a young age as a vocalist and performed as an artist outside the temple.[194]

Conclusions

We can distinguish three types of tasks performed by devadasis during festival ritual (*naimittikārcanā*):

1. propitiatory tasks
2. ritual tasks
3. 'entertainment'.

The first, propitiatory function of the devadasi is seen at the commencement and close of a festival-total, and at the commencement and close of a partial-festival, or festival-day. The *balidāna* ritual is observed with great elaboration at the commencement of a *Brahmotsava* (great festival), and with less detail during every day of the festival. In both propitiatory circumambulations the devadasi had a traditional role to fulfill. The closing ceremonies of a great festival (*Brahmotsava, Mahotsava, Skandotsava*) consist of a sequence of ablutions, application of cooling and protective substances, and offerings of light. These rituals are found in the daily festival routine as well, when the deity returns from his 'rounds' and is prepared for re-entering the sanctum; these ablutions and light-offerings take place in the *maṇḍapa* facing the inner shrine. Here, too, the person of the devadasi figured prominently in both ritual preparations. The offerings of *puṣpāñjalis*, the pot-lamp and the imitation of the *dīpārādhanā* belong to this propitiatory character of her participation.

The purely ritual tasks in the festival ritual are found in the 'dramatic' role which the devadasi assumes to bring out the topical character of the *utsava* and the aspect of the god whose circumambulation is celebrated. As such we may see her dressed as Kāma or as a bridal maid, as a peace maker between the quarreling god and goddess, or as a messenger of the goddess. Among her daily, ritual tasks we can count her role as a herald singing *eccarikais* "Caution!" songs, her role as 'a lady in waiting' singing swing and cradle songs (*lāli, ūñjal*), fanning the god, and singing other songs that suit the situation of the divine pair (like *nalaṅku* or bridal songs, *ōṭam* or boat songs).

The third layer of her articipation in the festival ritual, the aesthetic and entertaining artistic function, can be found almost exclusively in *naimittikārcanā*. As Smt. P. Raṅganāyakī remarked, "Who would come for daily *pūjā*?" The artistic load of the repertoire of the devadasis, like the *catir kaccēri* (the dance-concert, featuring *alārippū, śabdam, jatisvaram, varṇam, pada, jāvali* and *tillāṉā*) and the operatic ballets were performed in festival times only.

As the *utsava* is considered a more 'heated' or *rājasa* form of worship, it is natural that the presence of the devadasi and her auspicious, safe-guarding influence were indispensable, even more so than in the daily ritual. At the same time it was *the* occasion, par excellence, to manifest the divine splendour of the god, his marital state (complete with quarrels and marriage ceremonies), his valour and just rule, and royal courtly grandeur. The artistic accomplishments of the devadasis served this purpose as well. The message of the divine order had to be expressed with all force and through all channels available. It was in this 'total theatre' of the *sacer ludus* of Hinduism that the art of the devadasis was conceived, appreciated and flourished. It was guarded and protected by the realm of the festival; a sacred realm, which had been laid out and was withdrawn back into its source with the help of her participation.

3. *Form of the Devadasi Tradition within the Temple Ritual in Tamilnadu*

Introduction

We may discern several different layers of performance in the artistic traditions of the devadasis, as well in time, geographical origin as in social strata. In time: ancient, ritual-magic compositions that are performed mainly with a preventive, propitiatory aim (like the *navasandhi/pañcamūrti kautvams* and *puṣpāñjali* dances), together with classical, devotional literary compositions (like Tevaram songs) are found in the repertoire of temple music and dance of this century, side by side with later, less-classical or sophisticated compositions like *jāvali, cintu*, 'gunset' and *kōlāṭṭam*.[195] The different geographical layers are seen in the indiscriminate use of Tamil, Telugu and even Kannada compositions. Many of the devadasis who live in Tamilnadu are bi-lingual. They, usually, prefer to speak Telugu but are equally willing to speak their rather characteristic blend of Tamil: a type

of Brahmin dialect, mixed with Telugu. Finally, the socio-cultural differences are evident in the contrast between 'solemn', ritualistic songs in Sanskrit, and the more emotional songs that express a warm feeling of *bhakti* or that reflect folk-songs and folk-games, in Tamil and Telugu. To the first category belong the *maṅgaḷas*, *stotras*, *cūrṇikās*, *praharīlus* and *eccarikais*, to the latter category, for instance, the cradle songs (*lāli*), swing songs (*ūñjal*), boat songs (*ōṭam*), wedding songs (*nalaṅku*) and quarrel songs.

Connected with these three different points of divergence is also the degree of artistic sophistication. It is extremely difficult to make any definite statement about this degree of artistic sophistication during the previous centuries on the basis what has been handed down to us by the former devadasis of our times. In the 18th and 19th centuries there existed a lively exchange between top-rank court musicians, dancers and dance-master and the artists belonging to the temple.[196] From this point of view we can understand the arts that were performed in the temple as the acumen of artistic expression. However, when we come to this century, we must conclude that, in the meantime, these two socio-cultural foci diverged wider and wider. The amount of classicism that was found on the concert-platform of the first half of this century, is totally absent in the remaining specimens of temple repertoire. The art that is presented nowadays on the concert-platform removes itself even further from the authentic art of the devadasis and develops into an independent style.

The examples of the traditional temple repertoire that will be given on the following pages belong to an artistic temperament that differs deeply from the modern concert-practices. Both the dance-technique (*nṛtta*) and mime (*abhinaya*) were devotional, i.e., not theatrical, virtuoso or destined to please a large public. The vocal rendering of the songs is simple and straightforward, the dance-steps are related to the classical tenets of the *catir* tradition, but the amount of elaboration is kept at a minimum, and the mime was performed without many paraphrases and in a rather fast, matter-of-fact manner. This general characterisation of the temple repertoire is encountered as well in the dance traditions of *Araiyar Sēvai* in Vaishnavite temples, and *Bhāmā Sūtram* performed as part of the worship of Sakti.[197] *Araiyar Sēvai* is a combination of dance and mime based on devotional texts. However, the element of foot-work is kept at a minimum; wherever dance-steps (*aṭavus*) occur they are simple and elementary. In the tradition of *Bhāmā Sūtram*[198] there are few wide movements. "It has no real concept of space or audience; there was scarecely room to turn in the confines of the small temple room in which the rituals were performed.(....) The rituals followed slokas and had a smooth, systematic working of their own, following one another as in puja."

As time progresses and removes itself from the actual performance of dance by devadasis in temples, public opinion has taken a fancy to 'devotional items' and 'ritual dances' like *kautvams*. However, nothing is more misleading than the contemporary versions of these compositions that have

been recreated for the concert platform. They differ basically in temperament, sophistication and purpose. The temple art was first and foremost ritual and devotional, its practice was simple and modest, and its purpose no more and no less than to fulfill a task which was considered of ritual importance, not of artistic or spectacular display. This ritual-*cum*-devotional character of the temple repertoire should be kept in mind while reading the selected specimens of devadasi temple art, presented on the following pages.[199]

Nityārcanā

1. *Mēlukolupu*

rāga : bhūpāla; tāla: āti; language: Telugu
occasion : to be sung at 4.00 o'clock A.M.[200]
informant: Smt. P. Raṅganāyakī

Elimitōḍatō kōḍi kūsēnu indu vennela kānti māsenu, jalajamulu vikasinci pūvulu saurabhamuvē-yen, dēva mēlukonav'ayyā. Aruya tūrpu'na tellavārēnu amaraṭi mīṛamul'ella mīṛēnu, ceruku vilṭ-uḍu kaḍaku nēcēnu śaramul(u) anninē-yen,dēva mēlukonav'ayyā. Sarasicākṣ' priya hṛdaya dēśamu sakala dikkulu jōcci viḷasina, nilaka hṛdaya kanya vīḍulu viśvamāy-yen; munilu pogaḍika era kaluvulu mūḍu vēḷala mūḍu pūvulu anudunam' punavacci muḍicina, Āṛumuka Vēlā, dēva mēlukonav'ayyā.

Indrādi dēvatulu pogaḍikana Nāradādulu pāḍa pāḍaka, Rambhā, Urvaśī, Mēnakādulu nāṭyam āḍagana, dēva mēlukonav'ayyā.

Malahari, bhūpāla, bhairavī, mālavi modalaina rāgamu velaku lantaru pāḍa vacciri vakka mīra kaṇṇu, dēva mēlukonav'aiyyā. Mēlukō dēvendra pūjita, mēlukō Ceṅkalvarayyā, mēlukō Cirutaṇipurādipā, mēlukonav'aiyyā.

"The cock says I crow with pleasure, and efface the moonlight, lotuses have blossomed, flowers smell sweetly, so, please, Lord wake up.
I dawn in the red East and transgress all beauties of the immortals, I lay so many arrows to the extreme end of the string, before loosening the sugarcane bow, so, please, Lord, wake up. All over the towns there are girls with steadfast heart, illuminated by lustre that spreads throughout all regions of the country where dwell women within lotus-eyes and dear hearts; the *munis* (saints) are praising, food is mixed, there are three flowers for three occasions, you who are ancient having come daily, Oh Āṛumuka Vēlā, Lord, please wake up.
The gods, headed by Indra, are praising, Nārada and companions are singing songs, Rambhā, Urvaśī and Mēnakā are performing dance, Lord, please wake up.
You (all) have come singing the bright lantern of the *rāgas malahari, bhūpāla, bhairavī* and *mālavi* as the first *rāga*. O Lord, please wake up, at least one eye of yours.

Wake up, you who are worshipped by Dēvendra, wake up Ceṅkalvarayyā, wake up Lord, over Tiruttani, please wake up.

2. *Pakalu Vināyaka Stotra*

rāga: unknown; *tāla*: not specified; language: Sanskrit/Telugu
occasion: to be sung during *cuṟṟikōyil pūjā* (worship at the shrines around the central *sanctum*) at ca. 11.00 A.M.

informant: Smt. P. Raṅganāyakī

Śrīgaṇādhipa sṛta surādhipa śekhara pūjiñcita
dhavala prabhā nāgamukha lambodara kalhāra Vignavināyaka
mandahāsa makaranda bhūsaṇa sundarānana śobhita
mandakaruṇa bhīṣaṇa suravandita pāhi mām
sakalavidyā sārarūpa sadā jana saṃrakṣaṇa
prakaṭamūla dvāramandira bhānukoṭi samaprabhā

Śrīgaṇādhipa, Lord over the agile Suras, honoured as the most excellent, Vignavināyaka of white hue, snake face, protruding belly and *kalhāra* blossom,
you who are gently smiling, whose jewels are jasmine flowers, whose face is beautiful, resplendent one,
you whose compassion is tender, terrifying one, worshipped by the Suras, protect me.
Your knowledge includes all branches, you are most excellent, always protecting people,
evident root, abiding in the door, top of the ray of light, ever shining one.

3. *Puṣpāñjali for Ṣaṇmukha*

rāga: unknown; *tāla*: *catusragati eka*; language: Sanskrit and Sanskrit/Telugu

occasion : concluding the offering of the *kumbhadīpā* (pot-lamp) that is part of the *dīpārādhanā* of *cāyaraṭcai pūjā*: at ca. 18.00 o'clock and onwards.

informant: Smt. P. Raṅganāyakī

nṛtta I (pure dance)

ta	ku	tōṅ	ka	di	ku	tōṅ	ka
ta ku	tōṅka	di ku	tōṅka	ta	ku	di ku	tōm
ta	teyṅku	na	ni	tō	ta tey	yuṅka	tōṅka
di ku	tā	tey	....				

puṣpāñjali śloka
kalhāra hāra kalitāmarā puṣpapūrṇa
svarnābja pattra navaratna vicitravarṇa
phulla(ra) vṛnda navahallaka pūjitāya
puṣpāñjalir bhavatum(ē) śikhi vāhanāya.

nṛtta II (pure dance)

tā tey	tey	tat ta	tām takre	tā tey	tey	tat ta	tām takre

ta tey	tey	tat ta	tām	dit ta-ha ta		taluṅku	take dimi
dit ta-	ha ta	tām	.....	dit ta-ha ta		taluṅku	take dimi
dit ta-	ha ta	tēy	.....	dit ta-ha ta		tām	....
dit ta-	ha ta	tēy	.....	tām	.....	tēy	....
tā tata dikre	take tōṅku take-	take dimi	tōm	tām dikre	take	tēy	....
dit	dit	tēy	....	tat tat dikre	take	tēy	.....
dit	dit	tēy	.....	tām dikre	take	tām dikre	take
tām dikre	take	tēy	....	dit	dit	tēy	....
tattat dikre	take	tat tat dikre	take	tat tat dikre	take	tēy	....
dit	dit	tēy	....	dit	tey	tat	taku
tat	tat	tām	....	tat	tat	tat tat	diki
ton ton	nake	Atuli-	tan	ādi-	ya	Am-	bā
Vi- nā-	yaka	gaja-	mukha	pī-	ṭnam	atu-	lita
anā -	gata	sama-	vṛkṣa	nā-	da	tri-	bhinna
tā-	lam	āta-	varañ-	ci	tān-	o-	kali
tām	....	dit	tey	dit	dit	tām	....

repeat the previous nṛtta:

dit	ta-ha ta	taluṅku	take dimi	ditta-	ha ta	tām	....
dit	ta-ha ta	taluṅku	take dimi	ditta-	ha ta	tēy	....
dit	ta-ha ta	tām	....	ditta-	ha ta	tēy	....
tām	.....	tēy	.....	ta ta tā dikre	take tōṅku	take- take dimi	tōm

puṣpāñjali śloka

Let there be a flower salutation to the one who is worshipped with a string of white lotuses, lotus buds, fullblown flowers, a bouquet of flowers of varied colours like the nine jewels and with leaves of gold, with nine red lotuses, to this one whose mount is the peacock.[201]

While the *puṣpāñjali śloka* is recited the dancer stands still, forming a cup with both hands containing imaginary flowers which she scatters at the words *puṣpāñjalir bhavatum Śikhivāhanāya*. Both the words and the actions are very simple; at a closer investigation, though, they contain a rich symbolism.

The flowers that are mentioned vary in colour: the *kalhāra* flower is white (*Nymphaea Lotus*), the bouquet of flowers shows nine colours, while the last flower, the *hallaka*, is the red lotus. The symbolism of the red and white flowers is more evident than that of those with the colours of the nine gems. The number nine is often connected with the worship of the Devī,[202] and, generally, gems are considered to exert great influence on health, prosperity, wisdom, etc.; as such they are often used in astrology.[203] The red-white symbolism is more accessible. Brenda E.F. Beck describes clearly the importance of the choice of coloured flowers in South Indian temple ritual:[204] "……colour in Indian ritual derives primarily from underlying assumptions about the nature of heat. In essence, heat is associated with life and fertility. The energy which can both activate and nullify life is a kind of heat. This heat when taken alone, however, can be highly dangerous. It must therefore be focused and controlled in order to become a source of power which humans and superhumans can utilise. In ritual, as in mythology, heat must be encompassed or surrounded by cooling things. Red substances symbolise 'heated' states and white substances 'cooled' ones. In keeping with these larger notions the red used in South Indian ritual normally occurs against a background of white." This colour-*cum*-flower symbolism is used, too, in divination: in this context the white flower indicates an abating process, whereas the red flower indictes the progress and development of a state. In the case of the *puṣpāñjali* we see that the *kalhāra* flower is employed to extinguish evil, eruptive influences.[205] Hereafter, a new procreative process is indicated by the use of the red *hallaka* flower.

Nṛtta I and II

Any traditional dance-master from South India will, at the very outset of this composition, hear that he is confronted with a choreography of a very specific character, aim and locus of performance. The choreographic language (*coṛkaṭṭu*) reveals that this composition should be performed exclusively in a ritually pure (*maṭi*) place, and by an initiated performer. These diagnostic *coṛkaṭṭus* are *taku, tōṅka*. This feature is shared by the *puṣpañjali nṛtta, navasandhi* and *pañcamūrti kautvams*, it occurs never in the compositions that belong to the so-called dance-concert (*catir kaccēri*). The former compositions can be performed only with the observance of ritual

restrictions, while the latter may be performed for any decent public on a concert-platform.[206]

Choreography

The choreography of the present *puṣpāñjali* can be recognised as belonging to the *catir*-type of dance-idiom, although of a more rudimentary form.[207] The dance-steps (*aṭavus*) are recognisable to anyone trained in *catir* but without the flourish and finesse of the *catir-kaccēri* or present-day *bharata nāṭyam*. However, it is this idiom that we make use of to describe the different components of the *puṣpāñjali nṛtta* that was taught by Smt. P. Raṅganāyakī.[208]

I. Taku tōṅka diku tōṅka: The dancer stands straight, both arms stretched in front at chest level with *haṃsāsya mudrā*. At *taku tōṅka* she moves her right arm towards her chest, rotates the *haṃsāsya mudrā* over the right shoulder via the side into *ālapadma mudrā*, back into *haṃsāsya mudrā* in the starting position. This is repeated on the left side at *diku tōṅka*. Then, once more on the right side on *taku tōṅka diku toṅka*. After this triple rotation, the same movement is executed another three times with both arms and concludes with the standing position and *puṣpapuṭa mudrā*.

II. Ta tey tey tat tat tām: reminds us of the *aṭavu* '*tey ha tey hi*' (second variety); instead of the jump in *plié*, on *demi-pointe*, the dancer remains standing and moves only one hand at the time. The line is repeated three times (right, left, right).

Dit taha ta taluṅku take dimi: Similar to the *aṭavu* '*teyyum tatta-teyyum-tāhā*' the last step in this series (*vakai*) employs a rotating movement of both arms with an alternation of *haṃsāsya* and *ālapadma mudrā*. Instead of the eight *akṣaras* that form *teyyum tatta teyyum tāhā*, the circle movement is completed here in four *akṣaras* (counts of one beat).

Dit taha ta tām (*or tēy*): This close resembles the *aṭavu* '*tit tit tey*' (first series): instead of bringing the *haṃsāsya mudrā* of the right hand diagonally up, it is stretched in front while the left hand is stretched with *haṃsāsya mudrā* to the left side. The position of the legs is basically a *first position grand-demi plié*, with the right leg stretched diagonally in front, resting on the heel (*tit*); in this position the left foot is lifted and replaced (*tit*); hereafter the right foot resumes the full *plié* postion of both legs (*tey*). The combination *dit taha ta taluṅku take dimi, dit taha ta tām* indicates the right side execution of the step, whereas the same combination ending in *tēy* accompanies the performance on the left.

Dit taha ta tam, dit taha tat tēy: Resembles the first part of one of the so-called '*poy-aṭavus*' ('false steps') '*tey tey tat tā*'. In this *aṭavu* the leg is beaten on the floor once and softly replaced while the arm circles from the mid-chest position (in *haṃsāsya mudrā*) a full round (in *ālapadma mudrā*); here the arm and hand movements are the same but the leg is beaten thrice in the

rhythm:—⌣⌣—. *Dit taha ta tām* serves the right side and *dit taha tat tēy* the left.

Tām tēy: Two 'accent' beats (right, left) with *patāka mudrā* stretched to the sides (right, left).

Ta ta ta dikre take tōṅku take take dimi tām: This is a simplified version of the *tīrmāṇa aṭavu* (end step) in *tripatāka* also called '*tatikinatōm*'.

Tām dikre take tēy dit dit tēy: The first part follows a lateral *dit dit tēy aṭavu* as is used in the *tillānā*: one foot is crossed behind the other while one hand is resting on the hip and the other is held at shoulder height in *kapitta mudrā*. This step is followed by the *tit tit tey aṭavu* described under *dit taha ta tām*. The combination is executed on the right and left side.

Tām dikre take tām dikre take tēy+dit dit tēy: Like previous section; repeat the first part thrice, the *dit dit tey* once; the total is performed right and left.

Dit tey tat taku tat tat tām+tat tat: Similar to the *poy-aṭavu* '*tey tey tat tā*' that employs a floor pattern of two steps diagonally backwards and two steps straight in front while the arms are stretched in turns with *tripatāka mudrā*. *Tat tat* are two 'accent' beats like *tām tey*.

Tat tat diki ton ton nake: Resembles the *aṭavu* '*tattey-tāhā*'; in this case the legs give the rhythmical pattern⌣⌣—instead of four even beats, the arms are in place (*tripatāka mudrā*) and only the outstretched *tripatāka* hand turns on the last beat. *Tat tat diki* is the right-side performance, *ton ton nake* the left-side execution. This concludes the pure dance (*nṛtta*) that precedes the text-based mime (*abhinaya*) which we will discuss later. The final pure-dance line *tām dit tey dit dit tām* indicates another *poy-aṭavu* of the *tey tey tat tā* series: the dancer jumps *en profile* and squats holding her arms in *haṃsāsya mudrā* over her head; in a 3/4 circle she returns to the original standing position (*en face*) while circling the right hand in *ālapadma mudrā* round and lowering the left hand in *haṃsāsya mudrā* to mid-chest. Hereafter the previous *nṛtta* part *dit taha ta taluṅku take dimi*, etc. is repeated.

Abhinaya

The mime section (*abhinaya*) is, like the pure dance part, very modest. Although this *puṣpāñjali* is danced in honour of Ṣaṇmukha-Murukaṉ we do not find him mentioned in the text. There is no verb, similar to the texts of the *pañcamūrti* and *navasandhi kautvams*, but a mere enumeration of epitheta. It seems that the words were not quite understood by the informant: this is shown not only by the mixture of three languages, namely Sanskrit with Tamil endings and Telugu words, but also by the mime which does not cover the meaning of the individual words. Therefore, it has been extremely difficult to reconstruct a 'meaningful' sentence. At present our attempts have lead to the following:

atulita (Skt.)+*ṉ* (Ta. ending): unchangeable one, combined with *abhinaya* for speaking (*ardhacandra mudrā*),
ādiya (Skt. *ādi*): first one-*abhinaya* indicates 'so' (*patāka*),
Ambā: goddess *abhinaya* indicates goddess showing *varadā* and *abhaya mudrā* (two *patākas*),
Vināyaka-Vināyaka, although the *abhinaya* shows the *Siva-liṅga*,
Gajamukha-elephant faced, shown in *abhinaya* too,
pītham (Skt. *pīṭha*): 'seat, pedestal', shown in mime by one *patāka* placed horizontally before the mid-chest,
atulita: unchangeable one, in mime combined with the following:
anāgata (Skt.) unknown one, in mime one *ālapadma* is circled from mid-chest to one side, while the feet imitate the *poy-aṭavu tey tey tat tā*,
samavṛksa nāda, unclear to the informant and to us; in *abhinaya* two *ardhapatākas* are placed cross-wise on each other which usually indicates meeting,
tribhinna tāḷam: an unknown *tāla* indicated by clapping the right hand on the left and then waving and turning it in the air,[209]
āṭavaranci: unclear apart from *āṭa* 'to dance', the mime expresses a heroic walk with the hands on the hips,
tāṉ okali (Ta. and Te.) : him alone, indicated by *śūcī mudrā*.

All informants mentioned the performance of *puṣpāñjali* in combination with *kumbhārati*. Some devadasis remembered the *puṣpāñjali śloka* and *nṛtta* part I, while others had preserved only the sentence *taku tōṅka diku tōṅka*; Smt. P. Raṅganāyakī was the only informant who had performed the entire composition during her time of service in the temple.

4. *Lāli*

rāga : kurañci; *tāla* : not specified; language: Sanskrit

occasion : sung for the divine pair in the bed-chamber (*paḷḷiyaṛai*) at ca. 21.00 o'clock.

informant : Smt. P. Raṅganāyaki

Lāli lokacaraṇya, lalita lāvaṇya,
Lāli Subrahmaṇya, laliṭa suvareṇya,
Lā.....li.
Devasenākānta, devaseneśa.
devatāsenānī, deva mahendra.
Lā....li.

Lāli mover of the earth, playful lovely one,
Lāli Subrahmaṇya, amourous desired one,
Lā....li.

Lover of Devasenā, Lord of Devasenā,
Commander of the army of gods, Lord Mahendra,
Lā....li.

5. *Ūñcal* (*Ūñjal*)

recited; *language:* Tamil

occasion: at ca. 21.00 o'clock in bed-chamber where the divine pair is seated on the swing

informant : Smt. Cāyimātā (Śivavṛnda Devī)

Caṅkari avaḷ ūñcal āṭṭināḷ
Carasvati vantāḷ pāṭṭināḷ
Cakalatēvarum kūṭṭiṉār
Caraṇattiṉ muṭi cuṭṭiṉāl
inta rāṇi ammaṉ pakavattai toṭṭu
iṣṭamāy pacumpāl viṭṭāḷ
paṉṉīr veḷḷi jalam koṇṭu
akattai alampi viṭṭāḷ
ūñcalō...., ūñcal.

Śaṅkarī herself moves the swing.
Sarasvatī came, she sings,
Sakaladeva, too, joins.
After having touched the Lord by the jewel on the crown of the peacock, this queen-mother allows fresh milk to flow freely.
She has washed her chest with rose-water and silver water.
Swing.....swing.

Naimittikārcanā

1. *Eccarikai* (also called *Praharīlu*)

rāga : perhaps *kedāra*; *tāla*: *tripuṭa*; language: Sanskrit

occasion: sung at the *mahādvāra* when the deity returns from a circumambulation round the temple.

informant: Smt. P. Raṅganāyakī

Śrī kṣaṇikadṛśa śritakaruṇa vegarākṣasakulanāśa.
lalita hṛdeśa deva pāhi mām Subrahmaṇya deva pāhi mām.
Devasenālola daṇḍāyudhapāla pūvanārcita pādapaṅkaja,
Vaḷḷideva pāhi mām Subrahmaṇya deva pāhi mām.
Veṅkaṭaperumān rājendra hṛdayapaṅkaja mitra,
paramapavitra deva pāhi mām Subrahmaṇya deva pāhi mām.

Holy seer of transience, of fixed compassion, destroyer of the violent *rākṣasa* clan,
Lord of the playful heart, Lord, protect me, Subrahmaṇya, Lord protect me.
You who are desiring Devasenā, a warrior with the *daṇḍa* weapon, protector, praised by the world, with feet like lotuses, you who are the Lord of Vaḷḷi, protect me, Subrahmaṇya, Lord protect me.

Lord of Veṅkaṭa,[210] Indra among the kings, lotus of the heart, friend, supreme Brahmin, Lord, protect me, Subrahmaṇya Lord protect me.

2. *Cūrṇikai*

rāga : none, sing-song recitation; language: Sanskrit.

occasion : sung at the return of the deity to the sanctum of the temple during *Skandaṣaṣṭhī*, *Mahāśivarātri* and in the evening of the 9th day of the *Brahmotsava*.

informant : Smt. P. Raṅganāyakī

Śrī madhuravinda bahupuraṃdara pramukha vṛndāraka saṃdoha vandita pādāmbujāta nikhila munijana parijāta mandasmita varaṇa saundarya sarovara saṃjāta paṅkeruha śaṅkarakāra locana bahula vṛnda vimocana devasenā ramaṇi maṇimukha kamala prakāśama nivasamāṇa nabhita nija sundarānana vinigata gaṇa gaṇa glamita parimala paraṃparā karubhūṣaṇa bimbānana mālita prabhūta vilāsa maṇḍita Tāraka sa....candita udvāha rākṣasa.....bhūṣaṇa nīta nīvē (Te.) tati (Te.) chattra cāmara padmāṅkuśa kalaśa halamukhāṅkita ekāṅgita caraṇa kamala yugala śobhita.....[211] *kṣaṇikācala nivāsa kṣaṇikācala nivāsa rājā rājā mahārāja aṣṭadikpāla kalamāṇa abhayaṃkara biruḍu (Te.) Bommarāja rājā rājendra Vaṭivukumāra Veṅkaṭaperumāḷ rājā saṃdohana pradāyaka Vaḷḷi manohanāyaka Devasenā nāyaka dehī pāhi mām pāhi mām pāhi.*

Holy one, who receives sweetness, destroyer of many strongholds, first one, at the head of a host, large one, praised, born with feet like the lotus, complete one, descended from the *munis* (saints), gently smiling, bridge, born in a beautiful large pond, Indian crane, you whose eyes are like the conch, loosening dense flocks, pleasing to Devasenā, jewel-faced one, living in the bright sky, burst open, constant one, you whose face is beautiful, exhausting the many hosts that appear, fragrant one, you whose bracelets form an uninterrupted row, with a face that resembles the disk of the moon, garlanded one, perfect one, shining forth, adorned one, *Tāraka*....., bright, superior, *Rākṣasa*...., you with a wealth of ornaments, at the proper time you are marked by the parasol, fly-whisk, lotus-hook, pot, plough-share, you of beautiful shape with a pair of lotus feet, resplendent one,..... living on the transient mountain, living on the transient mountain, king, king, great king, inciting the eight regions, dispelling fear, honoured by the *Biruḍu*, Bommarāja, king, Indra of kings, Vaṭivukumāra, Veṅkaṭaperumāḷ, king, Lord who captures the mind of the milk-yielding Vaḷḷi, lord of Devasenā, bestowed with a body, protect me, protect me, protect.

3. *Katavaittiṟakkum*

rāga: probably *kedāra; tāla: eka;* language: Telugu

occasion : sung at the shrine of Devasenā after Murukaṇ has married Vaḷḷi (8th day *Brahmotsava* in *Tai mācam*).

informant : Smt. P. Raṅganāyakī
Śīghramugā vācili tīyyavē celiya Devasenā, celiya Devasenā.
Prākaṭamugā nīvu iccaṭiki rāka pō pōvōyi.
Valaci nī vīthitiki nēnu vaccini Devasenā, vaccini Devasenā.
Valapela vagapela nātō valatu pō pōvōyi.
Dakṣiṇyamu lēdā ō dayacēsi Devasenā, dayacēsi Devasenā.
Pakṣapāta pramāṭalāḍa paluka pō pōvōyi.
Cirutaṇipuri tammuḍāṉē celiya Devasenā, celiya Devasenā.
Valasi unnāmu rammu Ceṅkalvarāya.

"Quickly open the door, dear Devasenā, dear Devasenā."
"Go away without coming here publicly."
"I have come full of love to your street, Devasenā."
"Tender love and sweet repentance do not affect me, go, go."
"Are you without softness, please, Devasenā, please, Devasenā."
"Go, go away, without speaking fond words."
"I am your beloved from Tiruttani, dear Devasenā, dear Devasenā."
"We are desired, come, O Ceṅkalvarāya."

4. *Ōṭam*

Rāga: *punnāgavarāḷi*; *tāla*: not specified; language: Tamil
occasion: to be sung as part of *sarva vādyam* (all instruments)

informant: Smt. P. Raṅganāyakī; also played by Śrī Naṭarājasundara Piḷḷai[212]
Āṉantakkaṭal taṉilē kōvintā amarnta svara rākakkappal ativēkattōṭē caṟukiṟṟu: nākarikamāṉatoru nāṭṭai alaṅkāram nayamutta kāmpōti kaṉamutta pēcu kaṉṉaṭā kāpi eṉṉaṭā pēcum palavitamāṉatoru pairavi tōṭi ullāsamāṉatoru kalyāṇi rākam sapaiyalaṅkāramuḷḷa sāvēṟi rākam cuttasāvēri aticuttamuḷḷa rākam curutikoṇṭa caṅkarāparaṇam kāliṅka mōṭiyuṭaṉ kūṭi nākavarāḷi puṉṉākavarāli cōkavarāḷi cuppantuvarāḷi inta vitamāṉatoru pañca.....rāḷi urukkamuṭan nayampēcum etukula kāmpōti aṭāṇā nāṭaśrī ārapi kaula mālavirākam tāḷa layam pōṭum taṇyāci āhiri pēkaṭa cahāṉa āmpari pūpālam hrutaya pilaharium iṉṉum apurūpaṅkaḷiṉ piṉṉālē varukutaiyā coṉṉapaṭi kappal.

In the sea of bliss the boat of peaceful *svaras* and *rāgas* glided with great speed —Oh, Govinda—:

the sophisticated *nāṭṭai-alaṅkāra*, *kambhōji* full of affection, the lofty *kannaḍakāpi*, *bhairavī* that wonders in many ways "Why?" *tōḍi*, the frolicsome *kalyāṇi*, the *sāveri rāga* that contains the embellishments of the *sabhā*, *śuddhasāveri*, and *atiśuddhasāveri rāga*, the *śaṅkarābharaṇa* with its proper *śruti*, the *nāgavarāḷi* that resounds the pride of the Kalingas, the *punnāgavarāḷi*, *śokavarāḷi* and a *supantuvarāli*, like this five.....the eloquently affectionate *etukulakambhōji*, *aṭāṇā*, *nāṭaśrī*, *ārabhi*, *gauḍa*, *mālavi rāgas*, the *dhanyāsī rāga* punctuated by *tāla* and *laya*, the *āhiri*, *behāg*, *sahānā*, *āmbari*, *bhūpāla rāga* and the *bilahari rāga* that resides in the heart. As was said before, the boat comes behind the further derived melody-types.

5. *Sarva vādyam*

occasion : performed in the *mahāmaṇḍapa* during the *vasantotsava* and *davanotsava* as well as on the float during *plavotsava.*

informant: Smt. P. Raṅganāyakī

In the offering of *sarva vādyam* the devadasi cooperates with the priest. The general practice was to sing eight different pieces of music ranging from vocal excercises to the complete boat-song (*ōṭam*) that is given above. However, the number of offerings could be extended according to the ritual occasion. In other temples the total amount of instrumental, vocal and dance compositions reached the number of seventy-two.[213] The Tiruttani tradition dictated that the priest should introduce each vocal offering with the *avatārika śloka: Jaya vijaya digvaya bhava, sarvabhauma devate, akhilānta koṭi, brahmāṇḍa nāyaka. Saralivaricai* (*etc.*) *uddhārya.* 'Long live, be victorious, be conquering Bhava, Lord over the entire earth, end of the universe, ruler over the universe! Present *saraḷivaricai* (*et seq.*)!'

1. *Saraḷivaricai: SRGMPDNS SNDPMGRS*

2. *Jantaivaricai : SSRRGGMMPPDDNNSS SSNNDDPPMMGGRRSS*

3. *Alaṅkāram : SRGMGRSRGRSRGM*
RGMPMGRGMGRGMP
GMPDPMGMPMGMPD
MPDNDPMPDPMPDN
PDNSNDPDNDPDNS
SNDPDNSNDNSNDP
NDPMPDNDPDNDPM
DPMGMPDPMPDPMG
PMGRGMPMGMPMGR
MGRSRGMGRGMGRS

4. *Varṇam*
SNSDNPMPGM
PDNPDNSRSNDPDNS...
NS repeat
SSDPPDPMGR
SRGSNPDNS
PMGRGMPDNS

5. *Kīrttanam* (language : Telugu)
Nannu kannu talli nā bhāgyamu
Nārāyaṇī Vijayambikai
'Cast your eye on me mother, my luck,
Nārāyaṇi, Vijayambikai!'

6. *Lāli* (language : Sanskrit)
Lāli lokacaraṇya, lalita lāvaṇya
Lāli Subrahmaṇya, lalita suvarenya, lā....li[214]
7. *Tālāṭṭu* (*rāga : nilambari*; language*: Tamil*)
Cīrār caravaṇattil, eṉ appā, nēciyāy vaḷarnto ārārō...
'You who were fostered with love, O father, in the splendourous Śaravaṇa (lake), ārārō...'
8. *Ōṭam* full performance.[215]

Notes

1. Cf. D.W. Fokkema and E. Kunne-Ibsch, *op. cit.*, p. 45: "In the study of literary history, Lotman argues, one should distinguish between 'the aesthetics of identity' (*estetika tožděstva*) and 'the aesthetics of opposition' (*estetika protipostavlenija*). The first is characteristic of folklore, the Middle Ages and Classicism, to which one could add the ancient Asiatic cultures. The aesthetics of opposition is typical of Romanticism, Realism and the Avant-garde. The 'aesthetics of identity' presupposes the identity or near-identity of the code of the sender with that of the receiver." And further, in the same work, p. 48: "The aesthetics of identity can only prevail in cultures of a specific type which need (or are told to need) a centripetal force, a focus, rather than the centrifugal, individualizing tendencies of modern art."

2. Cf. J. Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*, Boston, 1955, p. 14.

3. Cf. J. Huizinga, 1955, p. 1.

4. Cf. H. Zimmer, *Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization*, Princeton, 1974, p. 13-16. One *kalpa* represents one single day of Brahmā and contains the sprouting and evolution (*sṛṣṭi*) of the universe out of divine, trascendent, unmanifested substance, as well as its dissolution and re-absorption (*pralaya*); one night of Brahmā lasts equally long. The day of Brahmā stretches over 14 *manvantaras*, i.e., Manu-intervals. Manu is the Hindu counterpart of Noah, the hero who escapes the flood. He is the law-giver of the next period which is called after him. These Manu-intervals are themselves divided into 71 *mahāyugas*. One great *yuga* contains 4 smaller *yugas*: the *Kṛta*, *Treta*, *Dvāpara* and *Kali yuga*, all of progressively deteriorating nature. The present *yuga* is the *Kali yuga*, named after the losing throw in the dice-play. This *yuga* will last 432.000 years (*saṃvatsara*). The *saṃvatsara* unit is understood in terms of human life: it is one year, containing 6 *kāla* (seasons). Each season comprises two months. One month (*māsa*) has a dark and a light half (*pakṣa*). A *pakṣa* lasts 2 weeks, a week 7 days and a day 3 *sandhis* (junctions). A *sandhi* is divided into 8 *yāma*, periods of watch, each lasting 3 hours. One *yāma* contains 12 *muhūrtas* (periods of 48 minutes) or 24 *nāḍi* (one *nāḍī* being half of a *muhūrta*).

5. Cf. M.L. Reiniche, *Les dieux et les hommes*, Paris, 1979, p. XII 'Un espace conçu et vécu'.

6. Cf. K.V. Zvelebil, Wiesbaden, 1974, p. 228.

7. Cf. K.V. Zvelebil, Wiesbaden, 1974, p. 229.

8. Cf. K.V. Zvelebil, Wiesbaden, 1974, p. 229.

9. Cf. M.L. Reiniche, op. cit., Paris, 1979, p. 147ff for the different characters of the goddesses. Cf. also the position of the shrine of the goddess Kamalambikai of Tiruvarur, and her 'heroic' pose (*vīrāsana*).

10. Cf. M.L. Reiniche, op. cit., Paris, 1979, p. 26-27.

11. Cf. K.V. Zvelebil, *Murugan, the Tale of a God and the Comment on a Culture*, under print.

12. Personal communication from H.W. Bodewitz.

13. Cf. L.A. Ravi Varma, Gaṇeśatilaka (Trivandrum, 'Rituals of Worship', in *The Cultural Heritage of India*, Vol. IV, The Religions, Calcutta, 2nd. ed., p. 447-448.

14. Cf. F.B.J. Kuiper, *Varuna and Vidusaka*, Amsterdam, 1979, p. 25-30, 129f., 136-138 and p. 161-168; also cf. J. Gonda 'The Indra festival according to the Atharvavedins', *JAOS*, Vol. 87, p. 413-429.

15. Cf. J.C. Heesterman, *The Ancient Indian Royal Consecration*, The Hague, 1957.

16. Cf. *Bharata Nāṭyaśāstra* Ch. II which discusses the theatre and the stage, and Ch. III which gives instructions for the *pūjā* to the gods of the stage; in it the worship of the *jarjara* plays an important role. The *jarjara* is described as the weapon of Indra. After worship of the *jarjara* with *homa* a kind of *ārati* is performed for the *jarjara*, the king and the female dancers (Ch. III 83-4). Hereafter a *kumbha* (pot) that was placed in the middle of the stage, adorned with a garland of leaves and containing water and a piece of gold, should be broken by the master of dramatic arts (*nāṭyācārya*, Ch. III 88).

17. Cf. K.V. Zvelebil, *The Poets of the Powers*, London, 1973, p. 37 ff.

18. K.V. Zvelebil continues on p. 45 (*op. cit.*, London, 1973): "But according to some later Tamil sources, even without the arousing of Kuṇḍalinī, the *prāṇa* in the form of 'breath' moves through the *cakras* and awakens the gods. First between 6-6.40 in the morning, by breathing 600 times, *Gaṇapati* is aroused and 'his hunger satisfied'; in the next *cakra*, between 6.41-13.20 hours, by breathing 6000 times, god Brahmā-Prajāpati is 'satisfied'; in the third *cakra* (umbilical), Mahāviṣṇu 'feeds' on our 6000 breaths between 13.20-20.00 hours; in the 'lotus of the heart', Rudra is fed by 6000 breaths between 20.01-2.40 hours; in the pharyngeal region, Maheśvara 'feeds' on our 100 breaths between 2.41-3.46 hours. Then, in the region of the eyebrows, we satisfy by another 1000 breaths Īśvara or Paramaśiva (between 3.47 and 4.53 hours). And in the *sahasrāra cakra*, Paramātmā is satisfied by another 1000 breaths between 4.54-6.00 hours. Thus, everyone's body is a pantheon, each region having its deity. And more than that: the body is transformed into a microcosm; the disciple identifies himself with the Cosmos, rediscovering the genesis and the destruction of the universe in our own body."

19. Cf. K.V. Zvelebil, 1973, op-cit, p. 59.

20. The famous temple of Chidambaram represents the hall (*ampalam*) of consciousness (*cit*) where Siva dances his dance of destruction of nescience and of the evoluted universe. Generally, the *citampalam* is thought to be in the heart of man. However, there is reason to believe that this dance of *ānanda* takes place in the *sahasrāra cakra* where the process of evolution is transformed into involution in the unconditioned (*nirguṇa*) Brahman. In this way the yogic experience of *sat-cit-ānanda* (being-conciousness-bliss) is identical with the *ānanda-tāṇḍava* which takes place in *Citampalam* (Chidambaram), alias the *sahasrāra cakra* of man.

21. Cf. Stella Kramrisch, *The Hindu Temple I and II*, 2 vols., Calcutta, 1946.

22. Cf. Graph 2, p. 89.

23. The best example of such an 'insolent' saint is Cuntaramūrttināyanār who scolded Siva for having made him blind and asked him to be his love-messenger.

24. Cf. M.L. Reiniche, *op. cit.*, p. 25 and 27.

25. Cf. K.V. Zvelebil, *op. cit.*, under print.

26. Cf. M.L. Reiniche, *op. cit.*, p. 45ff.

27. Cf. M.L. Reiniche, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

28. According to K.V. Zvelebil (*op. cit.* under print) we should make a distinction between the terms ritual, cult and tradition: "The most comprehensive term is *tradition*: it denotes the entire body of beliefs, customs and rites, behaviour patterns and cultural conventions transmitted both textually and non-textually in a traditional manner from generation to generation, and based on a consensus derived from a corpus of authoritative texts. *Cult* is part of tradition; it is religious worship expressed through temple and domestic ritual, ceremonies and devotional practices, often rather loose and with much individual

touch. *Ritual* is a system of religious ceremonies, practised by the initiated persons in the temple or at any other sacred place or at home, according to prescriptive rules; compared to cult, ritual is less individual and more highly structured."

29. Śaiva Āgamas: especially the *Ajitāgama* and *Kumāratantra*, the commentary on *Kāmikāgama* by Sadyojātaśivācārya and the *Kriyākramajyōti* by *Aghoraśivācārya*. Vaishnava Āgamas: the *Śrīpraśnasaṃhitā* was most relevant to our study.

30. Saiva informants included: Smt. P. Raṅganāyakī, Smt. Cāyimātā (Śivavṛnda Devī), Sri T. Sankaran, Sri T. S. Letchappa, Śrī S. Celvakaṇapati, Śrī V. Nāṭeśa, Śrī T. Naṭarājasundara Piḷḷai, Smt. P.R. Thilagam, Śrī Gaṇeśa. Vaishnava informants were: Smt. B.N. Rājalakṣmī, Smt. Sarasvati, Smt. Jejamma, Smt. Veṅkaṭalakṣammā.

31. *Śrīpraśnasaṃhitā*, ed. Mrs. Seetha Padmanabhan, Tirupati, 1969, Ch. XL, 34.

32. Cf. Sanjukta Gupta in *Hindu Tantrism*, Leiden/Köln, 1979, p. 126.

33. *Kumāratantra*, ed. South Indian Saiva Arcaka Association, Madras, Ch. XXX, 66-67.

34. According to one traditional view even the devadasi could be considered as *prasāda*.

35. The circumambulation (*pradakṣiṇa*) of a shrine is a striking feature of Hindu temple worship. Vows are made as to the number or mode of circumambulation. Before leaving the temple, the devotee should sit down for a moment in order to stabilise the *puṇya* which he has acquired and make it firmly rooted in himself.

36. This survey is based on the comparison of the daily rituals in a great number of South Indian temples.

37. *Kumāratantra*, Ch. XXX, 4.

38. *Śrīpraśnasaṃhitā*, Ch. XXX, 9.

39. *Kumāratantra*, Ch. XXX, 9 ff. discusses all ritual occasions for an *utsava* celebration.

40. *Kumāratantra*, Ch. XXXI-4.

41. Cf. M.L. Reiniche, *op. cit.*, p. 110, and n. 37. The verb for instilling this particular type of knowledge is *pukaṭṭu*, meaning 'to pour milk in the throat of a child' or to 'impress, imprint on the mind', an image which is used in aesthetics as well; here, the mind is seen as formed of solid wax, the artistic process works like a flame that melts the solid substance so as to enable it to be imprinted by the meaning of the artistic expression.

42. Cf. K.V. Zvelebil, *op. cit.*, under print.

43. Especially on the last day of this ten-day festival: on *Vijayadaśamī* (victorious tenth) the *purohita* conducts the *pūjā* and sanctifies all instruments which one uses in life to attain success. This includes books, musical instruments, ankle-bells for dancing but also typewriters and cars.

44. Cf. K.V. Zvelebil, *op. cit.*, under print.

45. On January 18, 1984 a newly built temple for *Śrī Kaṇṇapirāṇ* was sanctified by the performance of a *mahākumbhābhiṣeka*. The priest who will officiate in the temple is a non-Brahmin inhabitant of Nalliṭaicēṉai. In order to qualify for this task he will be branded with the marks of *śaṅkha* (conch) and *cakra* (disk) so I was told by Vidvan R. Kaṇṇaṉ who took the initiative to found this temple and collected funds for a number of years to achieve this task for the benefit of this village.

46. Cf. Introduction p. 6.

47. Smt. Raṅganāyakī (b. 1914) served as a devadasi in the Murukaṉ temple in Tiruttani; she was trained by her grandmother Smt. Subburatnammā who served in the same temple. After 1947 she married and moved to Madras.

48. The *Tiruvempāvai* by Māṇikkavācakar is sung even today by the *ōtuvārs* of the Śrī Tyāgarājasvāmī temple of Tiruvarur during the month of *Mārkaḻi*.

49. The late Dr. V. Raghavan composed the Rameswaram Ramanatha Suprabhatam (in Sanskrit). This composition was rendered by Smt. M.S. Subbulakshmi and recorded on EMI Ecsd. 3282, The Gramophone Company of India Limited, 1977.

50. Cf. K. Uma, *Ritualistic Music of Some Temples*, Thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Indian Music, University of Madras. On

p. 6 the author gives a list of rāgas that are to be played throughout a single day: 4. A.M.: Bhūpāla, Bauḷi, Malayāmruta; 6 A.M. Bilahari, Kēdāra, 8 A.M. Dhanyasī, Sāvēri and Asāvēri; 10 A.M. Surutti, Srī rāga and Maṇiraṅgu, 12. A.M. Mukhari, Pūrṇachandrika; 2 P.M. Nāṭṭa Kuṟiñci, Usēni; 4 P.M. Pūrvikalyāṇi, Haṃsānandi, Kalyāṇi and Mandari; 6 P.M. Śaṅkarābharaṇa, Bhairavī; 8 P.M. Kambhōji, Tōḍi; 10 P.M. Ānanda Bhairavī, Nilambari. Cf. also T. Śankaran, 'The Musical Heritage of Muthuswami Dikshitar', in *Indian Musicological Society*, Bombay & Baroda, Jan. 1976.

51. Smt. Cāyimātā is a former devadasi from Pudukkottai. After 1947 she founded an orphanage and conducts a very elaborate *pūjā* at home. She gives lectures on religious and philosophical topics and has written two books, *Maṇitaṉ eṅkēyō pōkiṟāṉ* (Man, where indeed does he go?) and *Kṣetrāṭaṇam* (Wandering from shrine to shrine), edited by the *Ṣaṇmatā aśrama* in Pudukkottai. She calls hereself Śrī Cāyimātā Civapirunta Tēvī.

52. See further Ch. II, p. 117ff.

53. At these two moments women should engage in actions that are pleasing to Lakṣmī and suggest the auspicious, benign nature of this goddess. Activities like stitching with a needle are forbidden. On the one hand, one would hurt Lakṣmī who is present in these moments, and, on the other hand, one would suggest to her the state of *tapas* and renunciation instead of domestic felicity and prosperity.

54. See further Ch. II, p. 117ff

55. There should be no death, birth or pollution by a menstruating woman.

56. The black beads are regarded as a protection against evil influences, especially *dṛṣṭi* (envious, evil eye). For the same reason a small black dot should be applied on the cheek for those who will be in the center of attention (like artists or beautiful children).

57. The knot indicated here is not the one worn on top of the head, but the one which women loosely twist in their hair after washing it.

58. These syllables indicate a very easy dance-step (*poy-aṭavu* or false step); of. also Ch. II, p. 156ff.

59. Traditionally, a large gathering of people is considered as the presence of god.

60. The confusion that exists in connection with this term has not yet been solved. Some maintain that *śuddha nṛttam* indicates the 'show of hands', *kaikkāṭṭum murai*; Sadyojātaśivācārya interprets it differently (see p. 118). Nowadays, fashion dictates that *śuddha nṛttam* is dancing without the accompaniment on the *tāḷams* by the *naṭṭuvaṉār* (dance-master).

61. Śrī V. Nateśa was at the time of the interview (December, 1977) the oldest *nāgasvara* player (ca. 83) of the Tiruvarur Śrī Tyāgarājasvāmī temple.

62. Cf. Ch. III, p. 184.

63. The saint Cuntaramūrtti nāyaṉār is worshipped in a shrine facing the main deity.

64. The wearing of the *rudrākṣa* is a highly significant detail: no woman before menopause should wear the *rudrākṣa*. For one reason, that she is ritually impure for a number of days (traditionally thought to be three days) every month, and for another reason that the wearing of the *rudrākṣa* indicates an ascetic leaning which is not appreciated in domestic women whose husband is alive.

65. Smt. P.R. Thilagam belongs to the family of *koṇṭiparamparai* devadasis of Tiruvarur. She traces her family tradition back to Paravai, the beloved of the saint Cuntaramūrtti nāyaṉār. Cf. also Ch. III, p. 184.

66. The song forms part of the opera *Tyāgeśar kuṟavañci*, published by the Tanjore Sarasvati Mahal Library (no. 130), edited by Dr. V. Premlata, 1970. It is the 25th song called *Vācal Vaḷaṅkūṟal* in rāga *Nādanāmakriya, tāla: kaṇṭa cāpu.*

67. The lady who performed this offering of flute music died about four years ago. Till her death she played the flute at the window on the Saturn side from where one can look into the sanctum.

68. See further, p. 159-60.

69. Probably derived from *gandharvas*, the celestial dancers who perform in Indra's court.

70. *Ajitāgama*, Vol. I+II, Ed. critique par N.R. Bhatt, Publ. de l'Inst. francais d'indologie, No. 24, I+II, Pondichéery, 1964-67.

71. *Ajitāgama* Vol. I Ch. XXIII, 6.

72. *Ajitāgama* Vol. I, Ch. XX on *nityārcanā*.

73. *Ajitāgama* Vol. I, Ch. XX, 205-211.

74. *Ajitāgama* Vol. I, Ch. XX, 250-2.

75. *Ajitāgama* Vol. I, Ch. XXV, 24-25, *nityotsava* of *Caṇḍeśa*.

76. So far I have not been able to identify these compositions.

77. *Kumāratantra* Ch. II, *paṭala* 5.

78. *Kumāratantra* Ch. II, *paṭala* 5, 108-9.

79. *Kumāratantra* Ch. II, *paṭala* 8, 16-18.

80. *Kumāratantra* Ch. II, *paṭala* 8, 19-23.

81. See further p. Ch. II, p. 117

82. *Śrīpraśnasaṃhitā*, CH. XXXVI, 31-2.

83. *Ajitāgama* Vol. I, Ch. XXXII, 13ff.

84. This commentary was read out to me by Śrī Muttaiya Bhaṭṭar, a *gurukkaḷ* belonging to the Murukaṉ temple of Tiruccentur, on 19.1.1978. Although the text was printed (Tamil/Grantha) it has not been possible to obtain any copy of this work in the subsequent years. The text was recorded on a tape, and has been translated from this source.

85. This resembles closely the custom of decorating the floor of shrines and entrances to houses with *kōḷam* patterns; cf. also Ch. I, p. 55.

86. Probably meaning the five faces of Brahmā.

87. One of the series of lamps that are offered to the deity is the chariot-lamp (*ratha-dīpa*), another favourite lamp is the *pāvaiviḷakku* at the entrance of a shrine: this is a doll of almost human size holding a burning lamp. In a modern novel of K. Sreenivasan 'Devadaasi', Madras, 1976, the temple-dancer Meena has to substitute her own person by a silver *pāvaiviḷakku* when she decides to quit the service to the temple.

88. The world of ghosts and spirits of the deceased.

89. There is no certainty as to the artistic nature of *karaṇas*. The temple freezes and walls of temple towers depicts many dance sculptures. These sculptures, however, cannot be anything but static, whereas the theoretical works like *Bharata Nāṭyaśāstra* indicate that *karaṇa* must have rather been a dance-sequence. Since the living tradition had died out by the turn of this century (or perhaps even earlier), the modern interpretations of *karaṇas* are unfortunately entirely based on speculation.

90. This term lives on in Kerala where those temple-servants (male and female) who live in the *prakāras* are called *ambalavāsins*.

91. The time-unit *muhūrta* is generally used to indicate an auspicious moment during which a given task should be performed (like binding the wedding string or necklace).

92. Cf. Ch. II. p. 168 n. 69. Other traditions of song and dance in the bedroom of the deity are *araiyar sevā* (cf. p. 176 n. 197) and *bhāma sūtra* (cf. p. 152).

93. This indicates the way of draping the *sārī* called *kaccai*. The *kaccai* manner is still followed by ultra-orthodox ladies; it differs from the ordinary way of draping the *sārī* in taking up the lower fold under the front of the *sārī* and taking it between the legs of fix it behind in the waist. The ordinary *kaccai* fashion is worn 'inside' and invisible on both sides (front and back), while the dance mode of *kaccai* fixes the border via the outside.

94. This information was given by Śrī T.S. Letchappa. According to him devadasis performed the entire *dīpārādhanā* during the youth of the main trustee, Śri Somasundaram, the father of the late Śrī V.S. Tyāgarājā Mudaliar. When Śrī Somasundaram became trustee, this task had been assigned to the priests. At one occasion he reprimanded them for their slacken performance and asked whether they would like to see the old situation of devadasis, offering *dīpārādhanā* reintroduced.

95. Cf. e.g. M.L. Reiniche, *op. cit.*, 164: 'Le pot de lait représente la déesse. Le pot surmonté d'une noix de coco est une maniére de symboliser la divinité. On le trouve aussi dans l' abhiseka: le rituel dont sont l'object le plot et l'eau (ici le lait) qu'il contient permet ensuite de consacrer la divinité sur laquelle le liquide est versé. Enfin, le pot est une des représentations par excellence de la déesse."

96. Cf. Ch. I, p. 28 and n. 129.

97. Cf. Sanjukta Gupta, in *Hindu Tantrism*, Leiden, 1979, p. 171 and also further on p. 95 and n. 20.

98. *Kumāratantra*, Ch. XXX, *Skandotsavavidhi.*

99. *Ajitagama*, Ch. XXVII, 67ff.

100. The *Kriyākramajyōti* became accessible to me through the classes which I had with the late Dr. V. Raghavan.

101. The group of auspicious instruments (*maṅgala vādya*) includes a great number of wind-, percussion and string-instruments. An extensive survey is given by K. Uma; *op. cit.*, p. 65-79.

102. *Kumāratantra*, Ch. III, 116-118 describes the instrumentalist as follows: having fasted, he should be clean, washed, wearing an *upavīta* (sacred thread) of the increasing moon, clean clothes, a cloth around the head, he should have a tuft of hair and three stripes of sacred ash.

103. *Śrīpraśnasaṃhitā*, Ch. XXXIV 42.

104. Probably indicates the performance of *pañcamūrti kautvam*, cf. Ch. I, p. 44.

105. Probably indicating the *brahmā tāḷam*, a pair of cymbals of a larger size than the ordinary *tāḷam*, cf. K. Uma, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

106. Lord of Sumitra, i.e., Daśaratha, father of Lakṣmaṇa and Śatrughna.

107. The *aśvamedha* is considered the most prestigious of the Vedic royal sacrifices: a specially consecrated horse (*aśva*) was set free to roam at will for a year, followed by a chosen band of warriors. Chieftains and kings on whose territory the horse wandered were forced to do homage or fight, and if it was not captured by a neighbouring king it was brought back to the capital and sacrificed at the end of the year, cf. A.L. Basham, *The Wonder that was India*, London, 1967, p. 43.

108. Lit. : 'going quickly like a horse'.

109. By courtesy of Dr. E. te Nijenhuis.

110. By courtesy of Dr. E. te Nijenhuis.

111. One devadasi, Smt. Jejamma from a Vaishnava temple in Muhur (Karṇāṭaka), disagreed vehemently about *śṛṅgāra* being a rasa fit for compositions performed by devadasis in the temple.

112. From the read version of the commentary on *Kāmikāgama.*

113. Cf. Ch. II, p. 118 and n. 90.

114. Unfortunately the recording was not clear at this passage.

115. That is, not polluted by the occurrence of a birth or death in the near family circle or by accidental contact with such event, or by the monthly periods (*dūram*-lit. 'distance, far').

116. *Śrīpraśnasaṃhitā*, Ch. XXXV 56-8:

mahāpīṭasya purato mūlārcabhimukham harim 56
sthāpayitva dṛṣṭidoṣān parihartum guruttamaḥ
dāsīn niyojayet kumbhadīpam ānetum añjasā 57
suṣnātā dhautavasanā svacchamṛtsnordhvapuṇḍrakāḥ
taruṇī namravadanā sarvabharaṇabhūṣitāḥ 58
samprāptapañcasamskārā vaiṣṇavī bhāvita svayam

117. It is remarkable that the priest should wave the potlamp. Smt. P. Raṅganāyakī denied that the *kumbhadīpa* should ever be waved by the priest during *Cāyaraṭcai pūjā.* Only during the *Curṟikōyil pūjā*, the priest might do so. The performance of *kumbhārati* was the main hereditary task for which devadasis were assigned a house and land. The

Mysore tradition deviates at this point, too. Not only did the priest not deign to perform this highly 'dangerous' task, even the devadasis considered themselves above such ritual; a low-caste woman was invited specially to perform *kumbhārati*, after which she would immediately leave the temple.

118. In this case the final *dṛṣṭiparihāra* is still performed by devadasis: the *dṛṣṭidōṣa* is removed first by the priest from the idol and transferred onto the *kumbhadīpa*; from there it is removed by the devadasis and their lamps containing clarified butter.

119. The occurrence of *mānuṣotsava* (*utsava* of a mortal man) is indicated, too, by Sadyojātaśivācārya who states that the *rājadāsī*, i.e., the *dāsī* in service of the king, should perform the *utsava* rituals and dances for the king.

120. The grain-pounding songs are a widely spread feature in Tamil culture. A very refined and sophisticated example is found in Māṇikkavācakar's *Tiruporcuṇṇam*, where gold is powdered into dust to adorn Śiva. This hymn was still sung by devadasis of the Śūcīndraṃ temple (Nāñcināḍu, Kerala) on the eve of Tiruvātirai (*Ārudra darśanam*). The smearing of powder of turmeric and gold resembles the *cūrṇākara* of an *utsava*. (Cf. K.K. Pillay, *The Śūcīndram Temple*, Madras, 1953, p. 227-8). The non-sophisticated versions are found in songs sung in villages, and in the rituals where the pounding of grain is part of the festivities. The repertoire of Smt. Subburatnammā/P. Raṅganāyakī contains, too, a grain pounding song. The Tamil text is very simple and of slightly obscene nature.

121. *Śrīpraśnasaṃhitā*, Ch. XXXVI, 75ff.

122. This indicates the performance of swing-songs (*ūñjal*).

123. *Śrīpraśnasaṃhitā*, Ch. XXXVII, 106-8.

124. According to *Śrīpraśnasaṃhitā*, Ch. XLIX, 145, there should be no *tāla*, *nartana* and *gāna* (song) at the time of extinguishing the lamp.

125. *Kumāratantra*, Ch. XXX, 386.

126. The following sources form the basis of this graph: 1. The data from the Śrī Mīnākṣī Sundareśvara temple in Madurai were given by Śrī Gaṇeśa, *gurukkaḷ* in this temple. He witnessed the performance of the *Navasandhi* dances combined with the singing of *Tēvāram* songs and mime (*abhinaya*) on December 29, 1955. It seems that the traditional performance of dance by devadasis was continued even after 1947 in very rich, self-supporting temples. The informant said that the tradition has died out now. The order of performance was: *Capai* (Skt. *Sabhā*) *vaṇakkam* 'greeting the assembly' by means of *alārippū*, then the *Navasandhi nṛtta* followed, after a short interval *abhinaya* was performed to the *Tēvāram* songs of Tiruñānacampantar (Śrī Jñānasambandha): (i) *Kātalāki kacintu...* and (ii) *Nantināmam namaccivāya...*, both in *paṇ kaucikam* (*rāga bhairavī*) and *tāla āti*, and (iii) *Ciṟaiyāru maṭakkiliya* in *paṇ paḻantakkarākam* (*rāga suddhasavéri*) and *tāla tisra tripuṭa*.

2. The data supplied by P. Sambamoorthy are found in his *South Indian Music Book III* (7th edition, Madras, 1973), p. 115.

3. *Adi Bharata Kala Manjari* is a manual by K.P. Kittappa and K.P. Sivanandam (Madras, 1964) that deals with the *pañcamūrti* and *navasandhi kautvams*. Apart from the details of *nṛtta*, *tāla* and *rāga*, the work supplies also information about the type of instrument (*vādya*) that is to be used and the indigenous melody type (*paṇ*) that corresponds to the *rāga* that is mentioned in the text. For *Brahmāsandhi kautvam* the *caccatpuṭam* instrument should be played and the *paṇ mēkarā*; for *Iṇdrasandhi kautvam* the *cācatputam* and *kāntārapaṇ*; for *Agnisandhi kautvam* the *cimma līlai* and *paṇ kolli*; for *Yamasandhi kautvam* the *lalita tāḻam* and *paṇ kaucikam*; for *Nṛttisandhi kautvam* the *piritimaṭṭiyam* and *paṇ naṭṭapāṣappiriyam*; for *Varuṇasandhi kautvam* the *cimmanantam* and *paṇ cikaram*; for *Vāyusandhi kautvam* the *pañcatāḻam* and *paṇ takkēci*; for *Kuberasandhi kautvam tāḻam kantarppam* and *paṇ takkarāka*; for *Iśānasandhi kautvam* the *aṇuma kumpam* and *paṇ āntāḻi*.

4. The *Naṭanāti Vāttiya Rañcaṇam* is a dance-manual by Gaṅgamuttu Naṭṭuvaṇār (19th cent.) available to me only in a handwritien copy of the original work. It contains many basic dance exercises and theoretical directions pertaining to rhythm, music and mime. Apart from the *navasandhi kautvams* several other compositions of this type can be found

in this work. Gaṅgamuttu Naṭṭuvaṉār does not give any *paṇ*; however, his indication of *rāga* covers exactly the indication of *paṇ* given in *Adi Bharata Kala Manjari.* In addition to the detail of instrument (*vādya*, or Ta. *vāttiya*) we are informed about the necessary *kītam* (Skt. *gīta* song), a unit which we do not find in any other source. For *Brahmasandhi kautvam* the *caccaṭputam* is played and *mattiyamāvati kītam* should be performed; for *Indrasandhi kautvam* the *cācaṭputam* and *kūrjari kītam*; for *Agnisandhi kautvam* the *ciṅkalīlai* and *nāṭṭarākam kītam*; for *Yamasandhi kautvam lalitavāttiyam* and *tēcākṣī kītam*; for *Niruttisandhi kautvam* the *piritimaṭṭiya vāttiyam* and *kuntali kītam;* for *Varuṇasandhi kautvam* the *Cimmānantaṇam* and *śrīkāmaram kītam*; for *Vāyusandhi kautvam* the *pañcavāttiyam* and *rāmakiri kītam*; for *Kuberasandhi kautvam* the *kantarppam* and *ṭakkar kītam;* for *Iśānasandhi kautvam* the *aṇumakumpam* and *āntāli kītam.*

127. *Śrīpraśnasaṃhitā*, *op. cit.*, p. liii-lvii.

128. Cf. K. Uma, *op. cit.*, p. 39-40: *The Temple at Tirumalai and Tirupathi* (.....) *The routine of Nityarchana*: "Early in the morning, the archaka after finishing his bath and his Nitya Karmanushtanam should do his pranamam (deep bow, SKS) to the key of the Sanctum and proceed to the temple holding it on his head and accompanied by the paricharaka and the temple paraphernalia and music. After pradakshina and prostrating before the dvara devas, he should open the door uttering the Mantram appropriate for the occasion and enter the Sanctum. Facing the deity he does his pranamam, and Songsters, Maidens, horses, cows, etc. should be made to stand before the deity. Brahmins should recite the vedas, dancers should dance and songsters sing praises. They should all remain in the Mukhamantapam. Then haratti should be done. At this stage, milk, navanitam and sugar should be offered to the Deity. The deity who was in the bed is now removed to the jivasthanam. The practice in Tirumalai however is for the doors to be closed soon after the archaka, paricharaka and the golla (lamplighter) enter the sanctum. In front of the closed doors the songsters sing and certain Sanskrit verses in praise of Srinivasa are recited till the doors are re-opened after Bhoga Srinivasa is shifted to his Jivasthanam from the bed. Cows, horses, elephants, etc. are not present for the function, neither do Brahmins recite the vedas. The haratti, milk and navanitam are offered only after the idol is removed to the jivasthanam and not while yet in bed. No mirror is presented to the Deity's face."

129. This indicates, probably, the singing of *Tiruppāvai.*

130. According to the *Kriyākramajyōti* this festival is called *maṭṭaiya utsava.* It is supposed to be great fun, since the devadasis are encouraged to beat everyone with the soft bark of the palmyra stem.

131. *Pāyasanna* is the ritual food, par excellence, for the popular *Poṅkal* festival, also called *Makara Saṃkarānti* (*Tai mācam*: January-February). At this occasion the newly harvested rice is made to boil in a new pot; at the moment when the *pāyasanna* almost boils over, all shout: *poṅkalō poṅkal*!! Boiling! Boiling! The next day, *poṅkal* is celebrated for the benefit of the cattle (*māṭṭu poṅkal*).

132. *Śrīpraśnasaṃhitā*, Ch. XLVIII, 23: *bhumirbhumneti mantreṇa.*

133. Cf. Ch. II, p. 155-6.

134. Smt. P. Raṅganāyakī is unique in many ways. In the first place, most devadasis are extremely cautious in revealing their temple-past. Due to the bad publicity which the tradition received during the first half of this century, and the rapid impoverishment of the temples and the devadasis, most of them believe that again "someone has come to throw mud on us". In this respect Smt. P. Raṅganāyakī has been a remarkable exception. I was introduced to her by Śrī T. Sankaran as early as 1977 and in the subsequent years we have built up a very warm tie of confidence and shared enthusiasm for the tradition. She taught me all those dance-compositions and songs which she herself performed in the temple, and at several occasions I was asked to perform them for family-members and neighbours. She speaks very freely about her tradition. Apart from her characteristic generosity, she is also highly cultured and an artist in her own right. She obtained all diplomas in Karnāṭic vocal music issued by the Madras Music Academy; after 1947, she gave regular dance-concerts

with her students. However, public taste changed to such an extent that hardly anyone remained interested in classical dance by devadasis. Only a few devadasi-dancers remained in favour. The third unique feature about Smt. P. Raṅganāyakī is the *richesse* of the tradition of her temple. By the beginning of this century only few temples maintained high standards of the performance of music and dance. The Tiruttani tradition is so far the most complete example of temple arts performed by devadasis. Smt. P. Raṅganāyakī was trained by her grandmother Smt. Subburatnammā, who served in the same temple. Smt. Subburatnammā wrote down all compositions that were sung and danced, in her own time, in the temple and outside at social functions (*saṃskāras*). This manuscript will be edited as 'Devadasi Heritage', possibly with a video recording attached, presenting a selection of the repertoire. Smt. P. Raṅganāyakī has given me the exclusive permission to complete this task as her only pupil in the tradition of temple song and dance.

135. Cf. *South Indian Festivities*, P.V. Jagadisa Ayyar, Madras, 1921, p. 43-48.

136. Jagadisa Ayyar, *op. cit.*, p. 59-64.

137. For an impression of the Hindu Festival Gokul Astami and its musical offerings of. E.M. Foster, *The Hill of Devi*, Penguin, 1983, p. 103: "This ought to be an interesting letter. It is the fourth day of the Festival and I am getting along all right though I collapsed first. The noise is so appalling. Hymns are sung to the altar downstairs without ceasing. The singers, in groups of eight, accompany themselves on cymbals and a harmonium. At the end of two hours a new group pushes in from the back. The alter has also a ritual which is independent of the singing. A great many gods are on visit and they all get up at 4.30 a.m.—they are not supposed to be asleep during the Festival, which is reasonable considering the din, but to be enjoying themselves. They have a bath and are anointed and take a meal, which is over about 9.0 a.m. At 12.0 is another service, during which three bands play simultaneously in the little courtyard, two native bands and one European, affecting a merry polka, while these united strains are pierced by an enormous curved horn, rather fine, which is blown whenever incense is offered."

138. Smt. P. Raṅganāyakī danced a few *kōlāṭṭam* choreographies with myself as partner.

139. Cf. Ch. I, p. 65ff.

140. Jagadisa Ayyar, *op. cit.*, p. 151-154.

141. This festival is observed especially by women who wish to bear a son.

142. Jagadisa Ayyar, op. cit., p. 146-150.

143. Cf. Ch. II, p. 153.

144. These compositions will be rendered in full (text, translation and recording) in 'Devadasi Heritage'.

145. Cf. K.V. Zvelebil, 'Vaḷḷi and Murugan-A Dravidian Myth' in *IIJ*, 19 (1977) p. 227-246, and K.V. Zvelebil, 'The Vaḷḷi-Murugan Myth Its Development', in *IIJ* 22 (1980), p. 113-135.

146. The order of compositions which is generally accepted nowadays is *alārippū, jatisvaram, śabdam, varṇam, padam, jāvaḷi, tillāṇā, śloka.* Another striking feature of the *catir* style performed in Tiruttani temple was, that the *varṇam* made use only of one choreography for the five *tirmāṇas.* Nowadays, *varṇams* employ five different *tirmāṇa* choreographies that are set in different rhythmical groupings (*gati/naṭai,* namely, in 3, 4, 5, 7 and 9) of the same *tāḷa.*

147. Smt. P. Raṅganāyakī was emphatic about the fact that the devadasis of Tiruttani never danced on the roads.

148. "*Umatti kāy*" indicates, probably, the *uṉmattu, umattu, umattai, uṉmattakam* thorn-apple (*Datura*). In addition to the use of this fruit Smt. P. Raṅganāyakī also remembered the scattering of *alāru* flowers.

149. Cf. Ch. II, p. 156.

150. This dialogue was taught, too, by Smt. P. Raṅganāyakī.

151. This indicated one of the easiest steps in the corpus of *aṭavus* (dance-steps).

152. Probably, the 'elder brother' refers to Śrī Vināyaka.

153. The term Irulas is used here in its most general meaning of 'hill tribe', *ādivāsī* ('original inhabitant').

154. This right, too, belonged to the house of Smt. P. Raṅganāyakī's family.

155. At such occasions songs like *nāpāli*, *ōṭam* and *nalaṅku* are sung.

156. The colours black, red and *mañcal* have strong symbolical meaning: black wards off evil influences, red is considered to be generally auspicious since it is connected with the goddess; *mañcal* is obtained from the *Curcuma longa* root. It is believed that it wards off evil influences, impurities, and that it secures health and longevity. Married women make frequently use of *mañcal*: they should apply it every day to the string of the *tāli* (wedding necklace); it is believed that this protects the husband (and by that their status of *sumaṅgalī*, i.e., auspicious female), and apart from that it serves also to maintain 'the feeling' of love and faithfulness to the husband. For their own benefit they may apply *mañcal* to their face as it is considered auspicious and protective. As a result the ochre colour has the connotation of being 'lucky' and auspicious.

157. Smt. P.R. Thilagam belongs to the *koṇṭi paṛamparai* devadasis of Tiruvarur. She is the granddaughter of the famous Kamalammāḷ, a devadasi attached to the same temple (Śrī Tyāgarājasvāmī). At present she lives in Tanjore where she directs a dance-school named after her grandmother (Śrī Kamalāmbāḷ Vidyālayam) and is a professor of music at a college for Karṇāṭic music.

158. Śri V. Naṭēśa was at the time of the interview that I had with him in December, 1977 the oldest *nāgasvara* player attached to the Śrī Tyāgarājasvāmī temple of Tiruvarur; Śrī T. Naṭarājasundara Piḷḷai, Śri T.S. Letchappa and Śrī S. Celvakaṇapati all belong to the same temple. Śri T.S. Letchappa, however, is teaching now at a music college in Madras. Sri T. Śankaran had an interview with Śrī T. Naṭarājasund*d*ra Pillai and Śrī T.S. Letcṇappa about the *nāgasvara* tradition of Tiruvarur which was broadcasted by All India Radio Madras, 30-9-1982.

159. Cf. Ch. I., p. 42 ff.

160. Three of these *varṇams* were published in the *Journal of the Music Academy*, Vol. XXXIII-1962, Parts I-IV, p. 182-6: 'Three rare padavarnas from Tiruvarur temple', by Vidvan Śri Chinnathambi of Tiruvarur.

161. The text of this *varṇam* is rather poetic; a paraphrase of the Tamil original runs thus: (*Pallavi*) Oh Tyāgarāja, how can I make you love me? I am helpless for advice. (*Anupallavi*) You, Tyāgarāja, who live on the banks of the Kamalālaya tank. (*Caraṇa*) 1. If I approach you face to face, you have neither head nor feet ! If I attempt to circumambulate you in *pradakṣiṇa* you have neither beginning nor end. You are all-encompassing. 2. I contemplated to bring you a food-offering, but you seem to be immune to hunger. I thought of offering you light and incense, but by nature you are light. 3. You who flourish in Tiruvarur, with the splendour of nine gems (*navaratna*), please protect me with your grace, enslave me, I have no other wish but to serve you.

162. In one *padam* a reference is made to the god's unfaithfulness: "Yesterday night you (Lord Murukaṉ of Tirukalukkunram) visited another girl; this is not the house, look carefully. (....) You both reclined on a soft mattress and I see the marks of teeth on your lips," etc. This *padam* in *rāga surati* is ascribed to Subbarāmayyā. Another *padam* (in *etukulakāmbhoji rāga*) begins with the opening words "Take back your money-you sinner-leave me alone". In a *padam* in *sama rāga*, *tripuṭa tāla*, ambiguity is encouraged around the Lord of Ettayapuram: the words may indicate both Lord Murukaṉ and the king of Ettayapuram. In any case, the heroine is advised to go and to shed her false modesty, because his arrival is worthwhile crores of millions. This aspect of financial and erotic interests comes out even more strongly in the *padams* from the Tirukkalukkunram temple; "Demand cash! If he desires credit, shut him out and lock the door, Oh girls. The old mother only states our caste tradition; so, it is immaterial whether the customer is Aiyyaṉ or Appaṉ or even the six-faced Vēlaṉ ! Demand five golden coins for cosmetics and another five for betel leaves and betel nuts. Pretend that you are the furious Vaḷḷi.....If he would pay

on the whole one hundred gold coins, then let him satisfy his carnal desires. Let the customers queue up; if they can't put down the money just twist your legs! Come what may. If one hundred golden coins are counted down today, he may satisfy his lust!" (*rāga Aṭāṇā;* by courtesy of T. Sankaran and T. Visvanathan who is in possession of the entire repertoire of the padams from Tirukkalukkunram temple).

163. Sri T. Sankaran explains the term *Tiru virukkuṛal* as *tiru* 'holy', *iru* (Skt.>*ṛg*) 'containing the truth of the *Ṛgveda*, and *kuṛal* 'short *Tēvāram* composition'.

164. *Nēricai* is a term used in Tamil prosody: Cf. K.V. Zvelebil, *Introduction to Classical Tamil Prosody*, under publication: '*Nēricai veṇpā* is a very precise and strictly defined prosodic structure, and is the kind of *veṇpā* most in use, so that it has been termed simply veṇpā (as such)'. Its rhythimical pattern is as follows:

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— — / = — — / — = /
// — = — //
— = — / — — / = — — / — =
— = — / — — — / —

165. *Koccakam*, too, indicates a metrical unit. Cf. K.V. Zvelebil, *Introduction to Classical Tamil Prosody*, under publication: *Koccakakkalippā* is derived from the *kali* metre. "According to *Yāpparuṅkalam* 86, this type of stanza may have one or two *taravu*, with or without a few or many *talicai*, and, besides, all other types of *kali* verse which do not conform to the other rules are also termed *koccakam*. The term *koccakam* is probably connected with *koccai* (of *IA* origin?): something mean, unrefined, vulgar. Or, rather more probably, with *koycakam*, ornamental pleating of a cloth or dress."

166. Sung at the window in the Southern wall of the shrine of Śrī Tyāgarājasvāmi, see *graph* 19, p. 140.

167. Cf. S. Seetha, *op. cit.*, p. 492ff.

168. *Mallāri* is a musical composition that is specific for the *nāgasvara* instrument. Cf. also further Ch. II, p. 74-5 and n. 176.

169. That is, the South-east corner.

170. Cf. S. Seetha, *op. cit.*, p. 494, '*Tyāgarāja pālāyaśumām raga Gauḷa, Tala Adi*'.

171. Śri. S. Celvakaṇapati assured me that these *aṣṭapadīs* are not the *aṣṭapadīs* by Jayadeva (*Gītagovinda*). Cf. S. Seetha, *op. cit.*, fp. 377: "Veṅkatamakhi is said to have sung 24 astapadis in praise of Lord Tyagaraja (...) on the model of Jayadeva's astapadis".

172. The chariot of Tiruvarur is considered the largest in South India.

173. These terms indicate rhythmical intricacies of a musical piece.

174. At present she lives in Tanjore.

175. The *koṭukoṭṭi* also means Śiva's dance after he had destroyed Tripura.

176. According to Śri T. Śankaran: "The *Mallāri* is one of the two exclusive fields of *nāgasvara* music for exclusive use in temples; these are: the *mallāri* and the *rakti*. The *mallāri* is played only in *gambhīra nāṭa rāga* but the compositions are mere strings of rhythm syllabes somewhat like the *jatisvarams* of the dance-repertoire and without any *sāhitya* (text)'. *Mallāris* are played in a competitive mood when more than one party is present at a festival. Usually the *nāgasvara* player is accompanied by the *tavil*, but in the case of Tiruvarur very often its place is taken by the *koṭukoṭṭi*. Another difference between the usual *mallāri* compositions and the particular one that announces the start of the *tēr* (chariot) is that *sāhitya* is given to the *tēr mallāri* ("Tyāgarāja, Tyāgarāja...."). The musicians feel that this composition invites *Tyāgarāja* to enter the 'arena' of the route followed by the chariot, not unlike a wrestler (*malla*) who is incited to present himself for a fight. The *mallāri* is played in different *tālas* that indicate the progress of the travel from one cardinal point to another. In daily ritual *mallāri* compositions highlight the progress of e.g., *dīpārādhanā*."

About the *rakti* T. Śankaran remarked: "The *rakti* is another feature of *nāgasvaram* limi-

ted to the temple. No vocalist or other instrumentalist has so far dared to encroach on this sacred ground. The *rakti* is not exactly associated with any ritual as the *mallāri* is but like the *mallāri* in *nāṭa rāga*, the *rakti mēḷam* is a red rag in a highly competitive exercise integrating intellectual, emotional and spiritual experience. It is a treat to the *rasika* (sophisticated listener, SKS) to listen to the invariable prelude of *kiravani* or *kambōḍi* or *nāṭakuṟañji*. On entering the arena the *nāgasvara vidvān* announces as a conventional courtesy that the repertoire for the night would include *rakti mēḷam*. The *rakti mēḷam* is as complicated as the *pallavi* and both of them together in a single programme would be a severe test of the *tavil*-accompanist. The *nāgasvara vidvān* comes prepared with the *rakti* whose beginnings (*eduppu*) and *āriti* (finale) are the accompanists' blind spot. The *rakti* has no *sāhitya* but there is a fixed formula "*Dheem takka tadhithom*" in *miśra gati*, then varied to *tisra gati* and then played in third *kālam catusra gati*. Tradition connects the *rakti* with Śrī Naṭarāja's dance'. Other typical compositions for *nāgasvara* are *natuppaṭṭi* and *taṭṭam*; they, too, occur frequently in the festival repertoire."

This passage has been quoted in such length since it illustrates the high degree of technical skill and artistic sophistication of the temple musicians belonging to the *periya mēḷam* (big band); it is probable that the artists of the *ciṉṉa mēḷam* (small band), comprising dancers, dance-masters and singers, achieved an equally high degree of skill and finesse. The spirit of competition may have played an important role, too. Smt. P.R. Thilagam now teaches her daughter, Kum. Kamalam, a dance composition in the highly complex *siṃhānanda tāḷam*. While dancing the artist would draw the pattern of a *siṃha* (lion) by means of sand on the floor. This composition belonged to the festival repertoire as well.

177. *Veṇpā* is one of the main metres of Tamil prosody. Cf. K.V. Zvelebil, *Introduction to Classical Tamil Prosody*, under print: "The *veṇpā* is the commonest, the most difficult in its construction, and the most esteemed kind of stanzaic structure of Tamil classical poetry".

178. That is, Vedic chant.

179. *Natuppatti* and *taṭṭam* are typical *nāgasvara* compositions.

180. The 16 *upācāras* are known as: 1. *āvāhana* (invitation), 2. *sthāpana* (placing), 3. *pādya* (water for the feet), 4. *ācamana* (water for purificatory sipping), 5. *arghya* (water for a guest), 6. *abhiṣeka* (ablutions), 7. *vastra* and *gandha* (clothes and 'perfume'), 8. *puṣpa* (flowers), 9. *dhūpa* and *dīpa* (incense and light), 10. *naivedya* (food), 11. *bali* (sacrificial offering), 12. *homa* (oblation with fire), 13. *śrībali* (procession along *balipīṭha*'s), 14. *geya* and *vādya* (vocal and instrumental music), 15. *nṛtta* (dance), 16. *udvāsana* (requesting to leave).

181. From the repertoire of the VIIth day of the *Brahmotsava*.

182. In 1981 the *ōtuvār* of Tiruvarur temple sang "*Tēvāram*" compositions for a recording of ca. 135 min. in the house of Śrī V.S. Tyāgarāja Mutaliār. I was given a copy of these recordings, and, unfortunately, so far I have not been able to identify any of the songs as occurring in the *Tēvāram* texts.

183. The local legend goes that Mucukunta, a monkey living on Kailāsa mountain, pleased Siva through his devotion; therefore he was blessed to be born as a Chola king on earth. As Mucukunta Cakravarti he subdued the *asuras*, and thus he won the respect of Indra had who granted him a boon. The king yearned for the idol of Śrī Tyāgarāja, and since Indra stipulated no restrictions, Mucukunta requested that the idol of the god should be transported to the temple in Tiruvarur. This wish had to be fulfilled. However, Śrī Tyāgarāja was greatly hurt that Indra had forgotten him for a moment and had enabled the king to express his wish. Therefore he cursed Indra that he should be reborn as an untouchable (*nīcā*) in Tiruvarur at the very same moment that he, Tyāgaraja, would leave Indraloka. Indra accepted the curse dutifully, but he expressed one request, namely, that he should be allowed to have *darśan* (audience) of Śrī Tyāgarāja once a year, during the *Niraipaṇi* festival. This request was heard, and even today there exists a family in Tiruvarur who claims to be descended from Indra and who should be enabled to have *darśan* of the god at this ritual occasion.

184. Cf. S. Ponnusamy, *Śrī Thyagaraja Temple Thiruvarur*, Government of Tamilnadu, 1972, p. 22-27.

185. Consider also the seven *tāṇḍava*-dances of Śiva-Naṭarāja.

186. Cf. M. Sarabhai, *Longing for the Beloved*, Bombay, 1976, Introductory pages.

187. Cf. Ch. II, p. 175, n. 176.

188. According to Smt. P.R. Thilagam no compositions by Muttu Tāṇṭavar were performed in Tiruvarur.

189. Smt. P.R. Thilagam copied for me a large number of Tiruvarur *Tēvāram* songs which belong to her family repertoire.

190. Tirthavari, i.e., *tīrtha* (Skt.) or *tīrttam* (Ta.), ablutions by means of water.

191. This is striking since the goddess Kamalāmbikai is depicted in *vīrāsana* (heroic pose) indicating her ascetic nature.

192. A possible tie between Yama, Kāma, *mātaṅki* and devadasis is suggested by the shared features of living in Southern quarters (the traditional habitat of devadasis), controlling eruptive danger by means of shield, sword, dancing and waving lights, and the control of sexual heat through the 64 arts found in the *Kāmasūtra*. The crucial danger that is conquered is in both cases excessive, eruptive heat.

193. Smt. B.N. Rājalakṣmī is a devadasi of Telugu-speaking background. She was trained and initiated, however, in Madras. She said that after her ritual marriage to the god she has hardly ever served in the temple. Her artistic career started at the age of seven as a professional singer and developed outside the temple. She lives with her family in Madras. Among them is Smt. Sarasvatī Ammā, who served in a Narasimha temple in Bangalore as a dancer.

194. Her *guru* for vocal music was P. Śeṣaiyangar.

195. Cf. Ch. II, p. 132.

196. Cf. Ch. I., p. 43ff.

197. The dancer Usha Narayan demonstrated Araiyar Sēvai on the Madras Television on January 2nd, 1983. She was trained by the priests of Śrīraṅgam whose traditional task it is to perform these dances. For this occasion she had draped her sari in the ritually pure Iyengar way, and was wearing her hair like Āṇṭāḷ (a knot on top of the head). These, however, can only be her own interpretations since the dances are to be executed by male priests. The amount of *aṭavus* was minimal, while the *abhinaya* seemed somewhat ritualistic and mechanical on the Sanskrit *śloka*-like texts. For Bhama Sutram see, Ashoke Chatterjee, *Dances of the Golden Hall*, New Delhi, 1979, p. 93 ff.

198. Ashoke Chatterjee, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

199. The texts presented on the following pages are based on a combination of the recordings that were made with Smt. P. Raṅganāyakī in 1977-78, 1980-81 and 1982-83, and the Subburatnammā manuscript. The full texts of the songs as given in the Subburatnammā manuscript need careful emendation and re-checking with our informant. This task will be completed while preparing the publication 'Devadasi Heritage'. At the present moment we have chosen to give the abbreviated versions as performed by Smt. P. Raṅganāyakī in the Murukaṉ temple in Tiruttani.

200. This song was sung every morning by Smt. Subburatnammā; however, in Smt. P. Raṅganāyakī's time its performance was restricted to *Mārkaḻi mācam* (December-January).

201. The manuscript contains *puṣpāñjali ślokas* for several gods and goddesses. The dance-part was performed only for the main deity, Śrī Murukaṉ. Another informant, Smt. Cāyiṛnātā, remembered a similar *puṣpāñjali śloka*, but no dance-part.

202. Cf., e.g., the *navāvaraṇa kīrtanas* for Śrī Kamalambāḷ by Muttusvāmī Dīkṣitar.

203. Traditionally it is believed that rubies bring prosperity, diamonds bring good luck and health, emeralds bring wisdom, and sapphires intensify the state of one's horoscope.

204. Cf. B.E.F. Beck, Colour and heat in south indian ritual, *Man*, Vol. 4, no. 4, December, 1969, p. 553-572.

205. Cf. also the *kalhāra-utsava* in *Śrīpraśnasaṃhitā*, Ch. XLVIII dealt with in Ch. II, p. 130

206. Nowadays, it has become a fashion to present newly choreographed versions of *kautvams* on the concert platform. The public and dance-critics demand 'some variation'; this demand is met by inserting a number of *karaṇas* (dance-poses) into the choreographies, sometimes as acrobatic as possible. Another concept which has caught the imagination is that 'the dancer should cover the entire stage'. The resulting picture is left to the reader's imagination.

207. We have decided to resort here to the old, traditional name of *catir* for the dance-style which is known now as Bharata Natyam. Since the time that society has removed the art from its natural centre, the devadasi community, it has undergone very far-reaching changes, both in temperament, training and artistic progression. To refer to the classical art as 'Bharata Natyam' leads nowadays to great confusion. The purely classical art of the devadasis was described by Smt. T. Balasarasvati (one of the last authentic devadasi dancers whose family tradition can be traced back two centuries to the Tanjore courtdancers) and Dr. V. Raghavan. Their joint-publication (in Tamil, Telugu and Malayalam versions) appeared in 1958. At that time, the rift between the classical and the modern style was not yet so deep. Now, in 1984, the two styles are mutually irrecognisable and irreconcilable. Perhaps the time is ripe to distinguish between a Classical Bharata Natyam (or *Catir* or *Dāsī Āṭṭam*) and a 'Modern' or 'Free' Bharata Natyam.

208. The second dance idiom we make use of to describe this choreography is that of classical ballet.

209. This indicates the traditional way of counting *tāla*.

210. This refers to king Veṅkaṭaperumāl of Karvetinagar.

211. Unfortunately not clear, either on the tape or in the manuscript.

212 Cf. T. Sankaran, interview All India Radio, 30-9-1982. Another *ōṭam* is found in the Subburatnammā manuscript which enumerates all the railway junctions of the East India Company!

213. Cf. P. Sambamoorthy, *Musical Compositions of Cheyyur Chengalvaraya Sastriyar and his opera Sundares Vilasamu*, Madras, 1952, p. vii-viii. Cf. also K. Uma, *op. cit.*, Appendix III.

214. Cf. Ch. II, p. 159 for the translation.

215. Cf. Ch. II, p. 162 for the full text and translation.

Chapter III

RITES OF PASSAGE OF THE DEVADASIS OF TAMILNADU

Introduction

In this chapter we hope to draw a clear picture of the devadasi as a *semiotic unit;* the *signifier* being her own person, and the *signified* being the Hindu tradition in which she functions. In order to do so we will first discuss briefly sociological aspects of the phenomenon of the devadasi against the background of Tamil history. Hereafter we will describe the rites of passage that transform an 'ordinary' girl into a devadasi 'proper' as well as the rites of passage that mark her initiation into the performing arts, and finally those rites connected with her funeral. After discerning these diagnostic features (*lakṣaṇas*) that characterise the devadasi 'proper' we will examine in how far these features are shared by the larger category of *nityasumaṅgalīs* that are found throughout South Indian culture.

1. *Caste and caste-distinctions*

The *term* devadasi does by no means cover the occurrence of the *phenomenon*. As we have attempted to indicate before, the devadasi 'proper', i.e., the temple dancer and songstress, is one *type* of *nityasumaṅgalī*. The term devadasi became popularly known as it was used frequently in the controversy concerning the tradition of dedicating women to temples or to religious objects.[1] The misuse of the term, and the social stigma that became attached to it, have caused many misrepresentations. One of the most basic errors is the reference to a devadasi and to her family as members of the 'devadasi caste'. According to the devadasi informants themselves, there exists a *devadāsī vṛtti* (devadasi life) or a *devadāsī muṟai* (devadasi order, propriety, hereditary professional right), but not a *devadāsī jāti* (devadasi caste). It seems probably that the right to *become* a devadasi was hereditary; however, whether this right was used or not, depended on many factors: the wish of the parents, the looks and accomplishments of the girl, her behaviour, and the consent of the different authorities.[2]

At present, we will define the social identity of the devadasi of the 20th century as follows: 'a woman of the *mēḷakkāraṉ* caste,[3] who has actualised her hereditary right to become a devadasi by the necessary initiation and marriage ceremonies. Hereafter she fulfills all traditional and obligatory tasks in the temple-ritual, and she enjoys the rights which the temple owes her, both during her life-time, and at the event of her death.'

A definition based on the Agamic tradition is given by Sadyojātaśivācārya

in his commentary upon the *Kāmikāgama*:[4] ".....in *Citśakti* (Sakti of consciousness) one can discern three divisions: *icchā* (wish), *jñāna* (knowledge) and *kriyā* (deed). From the face and feet of *Icchāśakti* is derived the *rudragaṇikā*, from the face of *Kriyāśakti* is derived the *rudrakkaṉṉikai*, from the face of *Jñānaśakti* is derived the *rudradāsī*. These three persons should be maintained and protected because they bring good-luck (*cupākkiramāṇa*). (.....) I will speak now about *Dhanaśakti*[5]: *Durgā*, *Lakṣmī* and *Sarasvatī* are *Dhanaśakti*. From the sound of the anklets of *Durgā* arises the *rājagaṇika* from the sound of the anklets of. *Lakṣmī* is born the *grāmakkaṉṉikai* from the sound of the anklets of *Sarasvatī* arises the *rudradāsī*. The *rājagaṇikā* is within the *dharma* of the *ādiśaivas* (caste of the *gurukkaḷ*)."

The derivation of the various devadasis from the goddess is most striking and important. We will return to this aspect later. On the following pages we will first investigate a possible mention of their caste in the history of South Indian culture.[6]

(*a*) *Classical and late-classical Tamil culture*

Tamil sources

In the oldest Tamil literature we may distinguish two types of possible antecedents to the devadasi 'proper'. The first category, the *āṭumakaḷ*, *koṇṭimakaḷir* and *mutuvāy peṇṭir*, seems to have continued its identity in the village cults of South India. The second category, the *viṟali* and *pāṭiṉi*, represents a most likely antecedent of the later devadasi 'proper'.[7] However, the bardic literature offers us no clue as to the caste of these two artists. The medieval commentator Naccinārkkiniyar (ca. 14th century A.D.) expounds clear ideas about the caste of the *viṟali* and *pāṭiṉi*: "*Kūttar* are those who are fit for the job of dancing and who belong to the caste of *parāśava*, and *veḷḷāla jāti*, dancing *bhārati vṛtti*, *viḷakkiyarkūttu*, *kaṉakakkūttu*, *kalayaṅkūttu*. Among the three groups (i.e., *pāṇar*, *porunar* and *kūttar*) it is the *kūttar* who express the eight sentiments and their outer manifestations in dance, and, if these are danced with skill, such a female dancer is called *viṟali*. *Kūttar* and *viṟaliyar* are open/mixed castes, *pāṇar* and *porunar* keep their castes clean."[8] Although this information is extremely interesting, we must realise that the commentator was more than 1000 years removed from the actual bardic milieu in which the bardic *viṟali* functioned. Moreover, Naccinārkkiniyar was deeply rooted in the caste-system and caste-thinking of his times. His commentary may not be of great value for the description of the social identity of the bardic *viṟali*, but it may be of great help in interpreting the medieval situation. The term *parāśava* indicates initiated Sudra performers of Agamic ritual. *Veḷḷāḷa jāti* stands for a number of non-Brahmin castes of the South: Mudaliars, Piḷḷais, Kaikkolans and others. These are indeed the social groups from which devadasis could be recruited.[9]

In the late classical period, the *Cilappatikāraṁ* (ca. 450 A.D.) offers a third candidate: the dancer Mātavi. Mātavi can be regarded as a *nityа-*

sumaṅgalī who shares many features with the later courtesans (*gaṇikā*) and temple dancers (*rudragaṇikā*). The affinity between Mātavi and the devadasis comes out most clearly in a comparison of the debut of the court-dancer Mātavi and the debut-*cum*-wedding of the temple-dancer Smt. P. Raṅganāyakī (b. 1916 A.D.). The significant elements of both rites are:

Mātavi[10]	*Smt. P. Raṅganāyakī*[11]
The *talaikkōl*, representing Jayanta, Indra's son, is washed by the dancing girl with holy water brought in a golden pitcher;	Elderly ladies fetch a *kaṭṭāri* (sword, spear, trident) from the temple; install it in the house of the dancing-girl. There it is first worshipped;
she garlands the staff.	the girl is given the *kaṭṭāri* and a regular wedding-ceremony is performed. An elderly devadasi ties the *tāli* around the girl's neck.
The *talaikkōl* is given to the state-elephant and is worshipped by the king and his five groups of advisers by circumambulating the chariot and the state-elephant that carries the *talaikkōl*. This circumambulation is preceded by the drum that proclaims victory. The musician-poet on the chariot holds now the *talaikkōl*.	The *kaṭṭāri* is returned to its place in the house; the *naṭṭuvaṉār* arranges everything necessary for a *navagraha pūjā*. The girls changes her dress and gives her first performance after the conclusion of *dīpārādhanā*. After the girl has danced the guest are feasted but the girl receives only milk and fruit.
The group goes in procession through the town and reaches the theatre where the *talaikkōl* is placed in its appointed position.	At 19.00 P.M. the girl goes to the temple accompanied by the elderly ladies and her family.
The dancer enters the stage and gives her first performance in the presence of the king.	After *dīpārādhanā* the girl performs *puṣpāñjali*, followed by a full concert program in front of the main deity. The *gurukkaḷ* gives her for the first time the *kumbhadīpa* (pot-lamp) which she rotates three times before the deity.
The king gives his full recognition of the skill of the dancer and her fitness to appear in front of him.	The *triśūla* mark (*muttirai*) is branded onto her arm.
He honours the newly accepted artist by the gift of 1008 golden coins and a garland of green leaves.	The devadasi receives all prestigious honours from the temple like a silken headcloth, a coconut, *prasāda* and a ceremonial procession homewards in accompaniment of the complete *periya mēḷam* (band).

	The devadasi sleeps in the room where is installed the *kaṭṭāri*. Next day in the afternoon, it is returned to the temple.
Mātavi sends her female attendant outside to offer the garland 'for sale' for another 1008 golden coins: the buyer becomes her patron.	After one month *prayōjanam* (nuptials) is celebrated: selection of a patron.[12]

What comes out most clearly in both accounts is the *similarity of structure* of the two rites of passage. In neither of the two instances do we find a mention of caste. Even in modern times similar rites have happened to girls of various castes: on the one hand, we have the account of Smt. P. Raṅganāyakī and of other devadasis of devadasi parents, on the other hand, identical rites were performed for Smt. Jetti Tayamma (Mysore) who belonged to a family of wrestlers.

Sanskrit sources

The term *dāsa* and *dāsī* are found already in Vedic literature. In later sources mention is made of slaves as part of the retinue of kings and wealthy families. Slaves could belong to the following categories: 1. *dattā*-given into slavery; 2. *vikritā*-sold as a slave; 3. *bhṛtyā*-maintained as a servant; 4. *bhaktā*-slave out of devotion; 5. *hrītā*-captive slave; 6. *alaṃkārā*-'ornamental' slave; and 7. *rudragaṇikā*-'courtesan' of Rudra (Siva), also called *devagaṇikā*.[13]

Since slaves were obtained in various ways, and could buy themselves free it is not possible to distinguish 'a' caste.

The secular courtesan, the *gaṇikā*, is depicted in *Kāmasūtra* (ca. 1st century A.D.-6th century A.D.) as a freely operating person, who is highly educated, especially in the field of the performing arts, the *ars amoris* and other subtleties that mark a refined, sophisticated life-style. Usually, *gaṇikās* were wealthy, and generously spending on public works and religion. They were often employed by the king in a form of 'bonded labour' from which they could buy themselves free. Such courtesans seem to have joined 'guilds' (*gaṇa*) of artists. According to *Kāmasūtra* the term *gaṇikā* indicates a distinction of character, beauty and skills but not a caste. This distinction, probably, has led Nacciṇārkkiṇiyar to interpret the term *viṛali* as 'skilled female artist'. The bardic *viṛali*, however, precedes the *Kāmasūtra*.

(*b*) *Medieval period*

The earliest medieval devadasi known to us is Paravai, the beloved of the Saiva saint Cuntaramūrtti nāyaṇār (end 8th cent. A.D.). His mystical poems mention Paravai but not her caste.[14] The *Periyapurāṇam* (12th century A.D.) supplies for the first time details concerning the "caste" of Paravai and of Cuntaramūrtti. We may presume that by that time caste-thinking had be-

come most natural and compulsive. The term which is used in the *Periyapurāṇam* with reference to Paravai is *rudragaṇikā*, and with reference to Cuntaramūrtti *brāhmaṇa ātiśaiva*. Both are connected to the temple in a tie of slavery or bondage, called *aṭimai*. Cuntaramūrtti was claimed by Siva as his slave, as such an incredible course of events, even more so since it concerned a Brahmin devotee. However, Siva's wish was fulfilled and Cuntaramūrtti became a slave of Siva in Tiruvarur. Paravai was a temple dancer in the same temple. For her it seems to have been a natural state of affairs to be a *rudragaṇikā* in the bond of *aṭimai*. When the two fall in love, they cannot marry because they are servants of the temple, bound by *aṭimai*. Therefore it is only on Siva's explicit orders that Paravai is given in marriage to Cuntaramūrtti.[15]

Still preceding the *Periyapurāṇam*, Māṇikkavācakar (9th century A.D.) makes mention of several girls who sing and dance in temples.[16] In none of these instances do we find any reference to their caste.

Clarity concerning caste-distinctions arises only in the heydays of the Chola empire. Inscriptions on the walls of the large temples of that period mention the buying and selling of slaves, voluntary acceptance of slavery and donation of people into slavery. When we take into account the amount of transfer and acceptance of servants, it seems that the system of employment by temples retained a considerable flexibility, in spite of the fact that the continued performance of particular tasks by one and the same person or family tended to become hereditary. This probable development appears to be in agreement with the definition of the *viṟali* given by Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar (see p. 180) and his distinction between 'open/mixed castes' and those that keep their caste 'clean'.

(*c*) *Tanjore period*

The shift of the centre of Hindu culture to the courts of the Nayaks and Marhathas of Tanjore was described in Chapter I. Especially those temples that enjoyed royal patronage flourished during this period. A lively exchange existed between the artists employed by the temple and those employed by the king.[17]

A fixed hierarchy of devadasis seems to have existed in the Śrī Tyāgarājasvāmī temple of Tiruvarur. The informants, however, do not quite agree about the correct order.

According to Smt. P.R. Thilagam there were six groups of devadasis who followed the *devadāsī muṟai:* 1. *patiyilār*[18]-the oldest and most prestigious class of devadasis; 2. *Īśāna pattiṉiyār* ('wives of Īśāna'); 3. *tēvaraṭiyār* ('slaves of god', Skt. *devadāsī*); 4. *tattai* ('given one', Skt. *dattā*); 5. *alaṅkāra dāsī* ('ornamental dasi'); 6. *rudragaṇikā* ('courtesan of Rudra-Siva').[19] Another grouping of devadasis was given by Śrī V. Naṭeśa:

1. *Tyāgarāja paramparai*

periyamuṟai	*ciṉṉamuṟai*
over 50 years of age	under 50 years of age

2. *Kamalāmbāḷ paramparai*
devadasis for the goddess Kamalāmbāḷ:
koṇṭi paramparai

Sri T. Letchappa claimed the following division of devadasis:

1. *Tyāgarāja parambarai*
   a. *rājadāsīs* ('royal dasis')
   b. *naṭaṉa dāsīs* ('dancing dasis')
   c. *sannidhi dāsīs* (dasis belonging to the Śrī Tyāgarāja shrine)
2. *Kamalāmbāḷ paramparai*, i.e., *Ammaṉ kōyil dāsīs* of the *koṇṭi vīṭu paramparai* (dasis of the temple of the Ammaṉ, belonging to the 'house of the consort')

According to this informant the *rājadāsīs* performed *dīpārādhanā* for Śrī Tyāgarājasvāmī before the Brahmin priests took over this ritual at the turn of our century.[20]

The exchange of devadasis between the temple and the court is attested by the fact that a 'set of devadasis and accompanyists' were sent as a wedding present along with the princess of Tanjore on the occasion of her marriage to the son of the Maharaja Sayajirao II of Baroda (19th century). This 'set' included devadasis from the Kāmākṣī temple in Tanjore and from temples in Kumbakonam. At the court of Baroda these artists received a regular monthly wage for the performance of duties that were rather precisely stipulated.[21] This instance proves the flexibility of the devadasi social system and the shared authority of the temple and the king over the devadasis.

As the temples ceased to be the centre of dynamic culture, great importance was given to the hereditary rights to be employed as a devadasi, either in the court or in the temple. In order to continue this rightful livelihood, children of non-devadasi parentage were even accepted. On the other hand, the criteria to be initiated as 'devadasi proper' became more strict, if only out of professional jealousy.

As a conclusion we may presume that the devadasis were never organised in a 'caste' in the strict sense of a Brahmin, Mudaliar or Chettiyar caste. The devadasis belonged to a professional group, nowadays usually indicated as *mēḷakkāraṉs* or *icaiveḷḷāḷaṉs* (lit. 'farmers of music'), that protected their professional rights but that was free to accept outside members if necessary. The main criterion for denying a 'devadasi caste' is formed by the fact that no girl of devadasi family could be considered a devadasi 'proper' without the necessary initiation, wedding and dedication. To pass these tests was by no means an easy task as we will see later.

In short, we would like to suggest that the term 'devadasi' indicated a *structural function* for which a limited number of people could apply, but not a caste that was devadasi by birth.[22]

2. *Initiation ceremonies: marriage, dīkṣā and dedication*

Introduction

According to Hindu tradition, the state of life-long celibacy is considered abnormal and even dangerous. The ideal course of life is that of *varṇāśrama dharma*[23] which enables a human being to develop and to enjoy all faculties whether these are mental, emotional or sensual. If this mode of gradual development cannot be established, a serious danger of imbalance may arise. This imbalance is due to the fact that those forces that constitute life are not being harmonised properly. Among these, the dynamic forces of the life-process are imagined in a very tangible way as "heat", and should be harmonised with "cooling" forces; thus an equilibrium is obtained. A great number of stages of development in life is regarded as 'heated'. For instance, the birth of a child, sexual intercourse and passion in general, the first menstruation of a girl and subsequent periods of women: all these are very 'heated' states both of body *and* mind, which are considered inseperable.[24] Such eruptions of heat are understood as necessary for the process of life; nevertheless, they are 'polluting' and 'inauspicious'. 'Heat' is necessary but dangerous, as it may easily get out of control and destroy everything by its raging fire. Therefore these 'heating', eruptive forces should be employed only in strict symbiosis with 'cooling forces'. An entire net of interrelated actions (both preventive and purificatory), substances to be applied, foodstuffs to be consumed or avoided, exists in the Hindu mind, regulating the physical-emotional temperature of body-and-mind.[25]

In this web of opposite-but-complementary forces, the basic opposition in human existence is the male-female. These two should be in constant symbiosis to achieve a balanced state of body and mind, especially during the period in life that both partners are sexually 'potent'. This does not only hold for mankind, it holds for gods as well. All gods have wives, often more than one. Priests in temples must be married; if they were not, their heated state might affect the gods. The ascetic aspects of the gods and goddesses are considered very dangerous: Siva as Naṭarāja is considered 'dangerous' by most Hindus and should be worshipped only from a safe distance; some of them maintain that they would never dare to keep a statuette of Naṭarāja in their house. The destructive aspect of this *mūrti,* dancing on the achieved destruction and besmeared with ashes, is certainly 'inauspicious' to them.[26] So is the ascetic goddess who resides at the village boundaries (see Ch. I. p. 50ff. Her ill-temper is feared since it causes the eruption of diseases like small-pox, famine, draught and the death of cattle.

The states of 'heat' and 'coolness' are even of cosmic importance; as such they are involved in the processes of *sṛṣṭi* (evolution) and *pralaya* (dissolution), and the ensuing period of latent rest during the night of Brahmā (see graph 2, p. 89 By implication, it is understood that the balance between 'heat' and 'coolness' should be aspired on every level: the human, the divine, and ultimately even the cosmic. In human terms this means the harmonious union of the male and female.[27] Only the two combined sustain and nourish

life, whereas each taken separately is one-sided and therefore unbalanced and dangerous. In consequence, the marital state should not be denied to any man or woman: only in symbiosis the perfect balance of mind and body, health, happiness and prosperity can be established.

The two basic notions, namely that of the dynamism of the 'heating-cooling' complementary opposition, and that of the basic necessity to harmonise the male and female principle in a human life, take a special importance in the case of the marriage of a devadasi.

(*a*) *Agamic tradition of devadasi marriage*

Sadyojātaśivācārya gives the following instructions for the performance of the initiation (*dīkṣā*), marriage and dedication of devadasis: "The *rudragaṇikā* should wear her hair in a knot above the collar-bone; her waist should be adorned by a saffron cloth that is arranged in the ritually pure way. She should wear the Siva-mark of three stripes of holy ash and the *rudrākṣa* as the sole ornament. She should wear a silken blouse. In this way the *rudragaṇikā* (.....passage unclear) the *ācārya* tells: she should endure the casting off of ties; through *Śivadīkṣā* she should be released of earthly entanglements. *Śivadīkṣā* she should be released of earthly entanglements. *Śivadīkṣā* is a *saṃskāra* that is performed mutually inside the shrine of Siva while *samayatāḷam*, *viśedatāḷam* and *nirvāṇatāḷam* are sounded in proper order.[28] He teaches her the *pañcākṣara*[29] and ties the golden sign of the *liṅga* after having joined it onto the *tāli* by way of support. The *ācārya* performs *pūjā* for Ṣaḍāsana[30], then a two-fold *pūjā*, then *arcanā* by invocation etc. of Parameśvara; he offers *dhūpa* and *dīpa* to the goddess, performs a *pradakṣiṇa* around the villages accompanied by all instruments, and then, after having arranged ten *maṇḍalas* in the middle of the *mahāmaṇḍapa* in the *sannidhi*, and having placed the *rudragaṇikā* with her face to the North, the *bottu*-that was worshipped as described above should be tied around her neck in an auspicious moment. According to the tradition of he being her *guru* (teacher) she should not consider the *ācārya* who has tied the *bottu* in this way as her own husband; instead, she should place her trust always in the mental image. The *bottu* should not be tied if there is an abundance of *rudragaṇikās* in this *prakāra*. If the *bottu* is tied because of lust, 'heat' in the king, destruction of the king, famine and death will arise.[31] Next day (after tying the *bottu*) it is necessary to perform *ārādhanā* for Parameśvara as referred to above."

Initiation and marriage of the *rudrakkaṉṉikai* is performed in the following manner: "It is necessary to perform *viśeṣadīkṣā*[32] in the manner stated above, with the help of an *ācārya*, before the age of eight years. After all arrangements have been made in the *mahāmaṇḍapa*, the *bottu*—that is the *ātma* of Siva—is tied around the neck of this *rudrakkaṉṉikai*, outside the screen that is ritually clean; all musical instruments should accompany the event. Afterwards it is necessary to perform *nṛttaṉam* in the *śivālaya* (temple of Siva)."

General prescriptions: "There should be no dancing if the *bottu* has not been tied. The *rudragaṇikā*, *rudrakkaṉṉikai* and *rudradāsī* are the three persons who may obtain the *bottu*. After the *bottu* has been tied, it is necessary to perform *nṛttaṉam*. If this is done because of lust or otherwise, the king and the country will be destroyed. The *tāli* should not be tied after the age of eight years for the *rudrakkaṉṉikai*. If the *tāli*-tying ceremony takes place because of lust, a heinous sin happens. The *rudradāsī* may perform *kevala nṛttam* in the *prakāra* of Mahāmāri. Dance should be performed in all *utsavas*. The *tāli* for the *rudradāsī* should be tied in her ninth year. Hereafter it is forbidden to tie the *tāli*. If desire for sexual enjoyment of the *rudrakkaṉṉikai* overcomes the *ācārya* she may beat him. If the desire arises in the *rudrakkaṉṉikai*, she is advised to go to the *iccaiprakāram*[33], and in the morning of the next day favour the *gurukkaḷ* outside, because the Brahmin custom gives the first rights to the *ācārya*. It is advisable to perform *śāntikam* (propitiatory rite to avert evil) with him; it is necessary to remove the *tāli*, untie it, and destroy it as it is done on the day when a husband has died. The *rudradāsīs* may beat them. If they bear hatred towards them, it is necessary to sprinkle water."[34]

Initiation and marriage ceremonies for the *rājagaṇikā*, *grāmadāsī* and *rudradāsī*:[35] "The *rājagaṇikā* is within the *dharma* of the *ādiśaivas*. A *samayadīkṣā*[36] is performed in the temple of Durgā. The *vṛttakāramāṇa bottu*[37] is strung, Satcittumbara[38] is invoked and worshipped, *naivedya*, etc. is performed, then the *vṛttakāramāṇa bottu* is tied around her neck. If there is no temple of Durgā or Lakṣmī, then the *bottu* should be tied in the shrine of Hanumān, or in her own house, or in the *sannidhi* of Ambikai situated in the temple of Siva in that town. The *bottu* of the *grāmadāsī* should be tied in the temple of Mahāvittuvān.[39] The *rudradāsī* should have her *bottu* tied in the temple of Mahākālī. These persons should undergo the ceremony of tying the *bottu* at the age of nine years. It is not allowed to tie the *bottu* before or after that age."[40]

(*b*) *Informant account: Smt. P. Raṅganāyakī*

"When a girl would reach the age of 16, an application to be allowed to become a devadasi would be sent to the king of Karvetinagar. Such a petition (called *aṛjī peṭṭukōvala* 'application to be kept', i.e. by the temple or state) would have to be countersigned by ten priests and ten devadasis employed in the temple which the girl wished to enter. Generally, it would take six months before such a petition would be granted. During that time the girl was guarded very strictly: she would not be allowed to leave the house, so that no man could cast an eye on her. The training in dance, song, *bhāratam* and languages would continue indoors. In those days the admission was very strict. A case is known in Tiruttani that a girl who was well trained in song and dance, who was beautiful to look at, and who had, personally, no bad reputation was refused admission to initiation as devadasi. The authorities gave as a reason that her mother had 'gone astray' before obtain-

ing admission; therefore this family was not considered 'respectable' and fit for the task of a devadasi. Finally, the daughter obtained permission to enter a temple in Kanchipuram; there the rules of purity were not so strictly observed.

After the permission was granted, an auspicious day would be fixed for the function called *muttirai* (Skt. *mudrā* 'mark', here: branding). One month before this function the house would have to be kept in an absolutely ritually clean state. If the girl would have her periods within that month, she would have to stay in the house of a relative under constant supervision. Only after her bath (that concludes the unclean period) she was allowed to return home.

Five days before the actual *muttirai* another function would be held: *gajjai pūjā* (worship of the ankle-bells). This *pūjā* would conclude the girl's training in dance. For the first time she would dance with all musical accompaniments, wearing her ankle-bells. The dance-master would receive his final fees, and auspicious presents like betel-leaves would be exchanged. Food would be served to everyone. Professionaly speaking, the girl was now qualified to be accepted in the service of the temple.

On the day of the *muttirai* function, the girl would have to observe a fast. Elderly ladies (i.e., after menopause) would take presents for the bridegroom to the temple. Among these presents there would be a small cloth for the god (*kaupīṇam*). They would be accompanied by musical instruments. The ladies would offer the presents to the *utsava-mūrti* Vēlāyudha, and receive the cloth and flower-garland that was worn by the god from the hands of the priest. From the temple they would bring the *kaṭṭāri* (Te. sword, spear, trident) to the home of the girl. All musical instruments would accompany them. The *kaṭṭāri* would be taken inside the house and should be installed in a room that was kept especially 'clean'. Now, the girl would enter, dressed like a bride; she would be given the *kaṭṭāri*. Both would be invited to the bridal platform that had been arranged in the house. All traditional marriage rituals would be performed, and finally, an elderly devadasi would tie the *tāli* (with golden *bottu*) around the girl's neck. Grandmother's sister tied the *tāli* for Smt. P. Raṅganāyakī. After the distribution of the rewards for the ritual services the function was over, and the *kaṭṭāri* was taken back to its proper place in the house. In the meantime the *naṭṭuvaṉār* would have arranged in the hall of the house a *navagraha pūjā*. The girl would now appear in a new *sārī*, wearing the pyjama that is used for dance, and adorned by a *Kāśī poṭṭu* (marital sign made with sandal paste on the forehead of women, indicating their marital status). After *dīpārādhanā* the girl would dance regular concert items.[41] After her performance the guests would be offered festive food; the girl, however, would receive only milk and fruits.

At 19.00 P.M. the girl would be accompanied to the temple. There, she would dance for the first time *puṣpāñjali*, followed by a full dance concert, all as part of the *dīpārādhanā* of the *Cāyaraṭcai pūjā*. Hereafter the mark of the *triśūla*[42] would be branded onto her upper-arm.[43] The *gurukkaḷ* would

hand over the *kumbhadīpa* to the newly ordained devadasi, and she would wave it, for the first time, before the main idol. This function of dedication to the temple would be concluded by the bestowal of all honours on the girl by the temple: she would receive a silken head-cloth (*parivaṭṭam*, see p. 143 which was tied around her head, a coconut and other *prasādam*. Finally, she would be escorted home by the full *mēḷam* (band) of the temple.

At home, the *kaṭṭāri* was still in its proper place. In a ritual called *garbhadāna* ('giving of an embryo') the *kaṭṭāri* was placed next to the girl on the nuptial bed, while *śāntihoma* would be offered by Brahmin priests before the nuptial bed, as is usual in all regular marriages. Till the end of the ceremonies the girl would remain fasting. Songs of *lāli* and *nalaṅku* were sung and sandal paste was offered.

Next morning an elderly lady would first bathe, and then place the *kaṭṭāri* back in its proper place. After her bath the girl would be allowed to break her fast. In the afternoon (ca. 16.00 o' clock) a swing function would be arranged. The girl should wear a nine-yeards sari (as is worn by Brahmin women), a pyjama and a *Kāśī poṭṭu*; after the singing of *lāli*, *ōṭam* and *ūñjal* songs, the group would depart from the house and in a procession they would carry the *kaṭṭāri* to the temple and return it to the priest. Hereafter they would go to the *puṣpāñjali maṇḍapa* where the girl would dance *puṣpāñjali*.

After one month the devadasi was free to decide about her future: either she would accept a steady 'husband' or she would be kept as a mistress for a period that would be agreed upon." As Smt. P. Raṅganāyakī said: "We were God-fearing. After we got our status as devadasi, we could decide for ourselves. If some were deserted by men, they still had their profession which afforded them a living. We had our own discipline."

This interview represents the most complete and coherent account of the initiation-*cum*-marriage ceremonies. Hence, we have limited ourselves to the data gathered from this informant.

3. *Initiation into the performing arts: education and graduation*

(*a*) *Agamic tradition*

With reference to the *rudragaṇikā*, *rudrakkaṉṉikai* and *rudradāsī* Sadyojātaśivācārya enumerates the following requirements: "In their youth, within the ninth year, instruction should be given in sexual intercourse, including testing by means of the *mons veneris*, of practising the skills of Rambhā[44] and of bringing out charm. It is necessary that they possess all *lakṣaṇas* (diagnostic features) of exemplary bearing, a body with proper limbs, excessive beauty that shines like lightening, breath with good fragrance, speech like the peacock, capacity for *cīkṣai* (lessons in music and dance) with emotional involvement, general education and *bhakti* in the shrine of Sakti." These three types of devadasi perform the arts of *nṛttaṉam* and *kaintarvyam*.[45]

The devadasis of the second group, namely, the *rājagaṇikā*, *grāmakaṉṉikai*

or *grāmadāsī* and *rudradāsī* are not described in such detail. Their accomplishments are revealed by their traditional tasks: "It is necessary that the *rājagaṇikā* performs *kevala nṛttam* and makes the *rājasevā* pleasing in the same way as is done in the *utsava*; this, by way of daily protection of the town and the king. That way of life (*vṛtti*) is attributed to the *rājagaṇikā*. This is told about the way of life of the *grāmakkaṉṉikai* (*grāmadāsī*). It is necessary to perform *kevala nṛttam* in the temple of Mahāviṣṇu. In that way it should please them to perform *kevala nṛttam* as well in the houses of the *jātis* (castes) that are within the category of *satsūtrins* (those who wear the sacred thread) among whom the Brahmins come first.

(*b*) *Informants' accounts*

Smt. P. Raṅganāyakī

"At the commencement of classes in dance, chaff (*umi*)[46] is spread on the floor. The dance-master asks the girl to stand on the chaff, he takes her

Photograph 4: Smt. P. Raṇganāyakī, 1983.

feet by the ankles and directs them in executing the first steps which are recited as "*teyya tey*". Betel-leaves, new clothes and the first part of the master's fee are offered to him. A *pūjā* is performed for Śrī Gaṇeśa whose image has been formed out of saffron powder.

In the course of the education of an aspirant devadasi other arts are taught in addition to dance: vocal music, literature (*Mahābhārata* and *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*) and languages (Telugu, Tamil and a little Sanskrit).[47]

Her training in dance was concluded by the *gajjai-pūjā* which was discussed on p. 188 Smt. P. Raṅganāyakī did not mention any professional career as an artist while she was employed in the temple. The temple provided lands and a house for its devadasis, while the king supplemented their income occasionally when they had to perform in the palace. After 1947 she took interest in teaching her art to students of non-devadasi background. However, public opinion did not encourage true devadasi art, and preferred on the whole the new generation of non-devadasi artists.

Smt. B.N. Rājalakṣmī

Smt. B.N. Rājalakṣmī was trained at an early age in vocal music. Her guru was Śrī P. Śeṣaiyaṅgār. At the age of seven she gave her first public performance, and continued to do so untill her voice became too weak.

When she reached the age of sixteen she was dedicated to the temple. In preparation of this ceremony the *arcaka*, who was supposed to perform the branding (*muttirai*), came every morning to her house and read religious texts with her. He taught her the *aṣṭākṣara mantra*[48] and told her to repeat it 1008 times. Apart from the permission of the temple to be branded, she had to obtain as well the permission from the police and a medical certificate. At the police-station she was asked whether she took this profession voluntarily or by compulsion. After these formalities, the branding ceremony was performed in the temple. She too received the honour of a *parivaṭṭam* at this occasion.

Smt. Sarasvati Ammā[49]

Smt. Sarasvati Ammā was taught the art of dance from her fifth year onwards. Her training (*abhyāsam*) was with Munnusvāmī Nāyaṇār.

The first lesson was arranged on an auspicious day. After completing the basic course of dance-steps and the first composition from the concert-repertoire (*alārippū*), she was given her ankle-bells (*gajjai*).The next solemn occasion was her debut (*araṅkēṟṟam*): at the age of eight she danced for the first time in public. This was a grand occasion, because among the learned audience there was even an Englishman, she said. Her *araṅkēṟṟam* coincided with the branding ceremony; in her tradition this is called *samāśrayam*.

When she reached puberty, a *prayōjana* function was arranged for her and a suitable patron was selected. Like Smt. B.N. Rājalakṣmī, Smt. Sarasvatī Ammā's career was mostly an artistic one, outside the temple. She, too,

maintained that a devadasi without knowledge and skill in the arts was completely helpless and did not receive any respect.

The ceremonies that mark the graduation of the student in the arts of music and dance, usually coincided with the formal dedication to a temple. The complexity of these rites of passage differed from province to province[50] and from place to place within a province. In general, one may state that the rituals were performed in a drastically reduced form in great cities like Madras or Bangalore, whereas the tradition was preserved in greater detail in small places like Tiruttani.

4. *Funeral honours*

The funeral honours that were bestowed on a devadasi are significant for the ambivalent attitude and appreciation that the devadasis received from society. The highest compliment which was paid to the devadasis was, paradoxically, their funeral. These funeral honours are still valid for those aged devadasis who were officially dedicated to temples.

Smt. B.N. Rājalakṣmī

"When a devadasi dies, the god has to observe pollution, called *munnu mukkalu gaṭṭi* ('hardness for three times three quarters of an hour'). No *pūjā* would be conducted during this period. When the funeral pyre arrives at the temple tower, a garland is taken from the god and given to the corpse of the devadasi, an umbrella is held over the stretcher. After the cremation of the deceased devadasi the temple must be purified; on that day the god is served a curry of bitter vegetables."[51]

Śrī Naṭarājasundara Piḷḷai

"When a devadasi has died, her funeral pyre must be lit with fire from the temple-kitchen. Usually a funeral procession should not stop anywhere, but in the case of the funeral procession of a devadasi, the bearers stop for a moment at the *gopura* of the temple and place the bier for a moment on the floor. A garland is removed from the statue of the god and is given to the corpse, as well as a new sari, sandalwood, flowers and *prasādam*. A devadasi always gets a funeral of a *su-maṅgalī*, i.e., a woman who still wears her *tāli* because her husband is still alive."

5. *Devadasis and other nityasumaṅgalīs of South India*

In Chapter I we have seen the occurrence of ritual women whose task it is to control the divine, in practically all *foci* of socio-cultural life and in all historical layers of South Indian culture.

Generally speaking, one may distinguish three features that are shared by all:

1. Association with the dangerous divine, often in the form of the goddess.
2. Association with rituals that should dispel these eruptions of danger.
3. Association with some specimen of performing arts as a means to dispel evil influences and to assess positive, fertile prosperity.

The character of the rituals in which these women are involved, the degree of artistic sophistication and the respect that society gives them, depends largely on the type of god or goddess with whom they are associated. As we have seen before, the divine is often experienced as an oppressive, troublesome, even dangerous force which must be propitiated and controlled. Although the 'highest' expressions of Hinduism can be evaluated as pure *bhakti* (devotion), meditation, or realised enlightenment, it seems improbable that this is the level in which we encounter the phenomenon of the *nityasumaṅgalī*. The *nityasumaṅgalī* and the devadasi-*nityasumaṅgalī* are part of the process which was called earlier the *continuum* of Hinduisation. All levels of Hindu culture are involved in this *continuum*. Applying this flux of exchange from one level of Hinduism to another to the conceptions about the divine, we may give the following, highly simplified outline. The gods, or rather goddesses with whom the *nityasumaṅgalīs* are associated range from dangerous to benign to prestigious:[52]

Dangerous:— *Pēy* (demon) considered so dangerous that it can be controlled only by male officiants (*bhūtavaidyaḍu, aṭimai*)[53] or male impersonators (*pēy* and *bhūta* dancers)[54].

—*Saktis:* considered very dangerous, mostly 'tricked' by a man dressed as a woman,[55] or by a transvestite impersonating the goddess Kālī.[56]

—*Seven sisters:* less dangerous, but ambivalent. Goddesses like Mathammā and Ellammā belong to this category. Here, we encounter the first female ritualists, whom we can identify as *nityasumaṅgalīs:* the *mātaṅki*,[57] basavi, '*dāsis* of Ellammā' (see further) and probably the *rudradāsī* that dances in the temple of Mahāmāri[58] belong to this category.

Benign:—Perantulu: benign, auspicious goddesses who protect the family and the *sumaṅgalī* status of women. *Perantulus* are usually human in origin. A very chaste, unerring, loving wife, mother of several children and bringer of prosperity to her family, is considered ('lucky', i.e. 'luck-bringing') during her life-time and, after her death, she may become deified. In fact, all women whose husband is alive should be the luck-bringing goddess of the house, and can be worshipped as such. This aspect of bringing luck which Sadyojātaśivācārya calls *cupākkiramāṇa* is thought to be especially present in the *rudragaṇikā, rudrakkaṉṉikai, rudradāsī, rājagaṇikā* and *grāmakkaṉṉikai* or *grāmadāsī*. Their special power is due to the fact that they have sprouted from *Citśakti* and *Dhanaśakti*, that this identity is re-affirmed by their initiation. Therefore they are considered as *sṛṣṭi* of Sakti, the actual 'sprouting' or evolution of Sakti in this world.[59]

Prestigious: The great goddesses who are married to great gods. Lakṣmī is the prototype of this type of goddesses. She combines her own female powers (Sakti) with the male principle epitomised by her divine husband Viṣṇu. Pārvatī, Durgā, Sarasvatī and goddesses like Devasenā or Vaḷḷi share this status. The devadasi-*nityasumaṅgalīs*, and the *rudragaṇikā* and *rudrakkaṉṉikai* can be considered to belong to this category as well, since they are

not only one with the great goddesses but also formally dedicated to the great god and his temple; in this respect they are indeed the wives of the gods. The temple is their *kuṭi* (home) and the god their *pati* (Lord, husband). This is the meaning of the dedication and funeral ceremony.

The *nityasumaṅgalī* and the *devadasi-nityasumaṅgalī* are two differentiated expressions of one basic underlying concept of South Indian culture. Both have their own place in the *continuum* of Hinduisation. Their rites of passage, too, bring out a close affinity. From the abundant ethnographic material that is available concerning South Indian we have chosen two representatives of the broader category of *nityasumaṅgalīs*,[60] namely, the *basavi* and the *dāsīs* of Ellammā, in order to illustrate the spread of the concept of the *nityasumaṅgalī* and its diverse human 'fillers'.

Basavi

Basavis form a large group of ritual women, spread over a number of districts. Their riteș of passage differ from region to region. Among the Boyas, Bedarus and certain other castes in the Kannada-speaking taluks of Bellary district and the adjoining parts of Dharwar and Mysore, it is customary to dedicate one daughter as a Basavi if there is no male offspring in a family. The girl is taken to the temple, and married to the god (or goddess?, see further p. 194-6). She receives a *tāli* and toe-rings. From that moment onwards, she is considered a public woman, with one restriction, namely, that she should not consort with any man lower than her own caste.[61] She is, however, not despised, and at a wedding she prepares the *tāli* of the bride. Contrary to Hindu Law, she shares in the family property as though she were a son. If she herself has a son, he takes her father's name, but if she has only a daughter, this girl should become a Basavi in her turn. The children of Basavis marry within their own caste, without restriction of any kind. An example of this custom is found in therecords of petitions presented to European Magistrates and Superintendents of Police:[62]

> Petition of....., wife of.....
> I have got two daughters, aged 15 and 12 respectively. As I have no male issue, I have necessarily to celebrate the ceremony in the temple in connection with the tying of the goddess' *tāli* to my two daughters under the order of the *Guru*, in accordance with the customs of my caste. I, therefore submit this petition for fear that the authorities may raise any objection (under the Age of Consent Act). I, therefore, request that the Honourable Court may be pleased to give permission to the tying of the *tāli* to my daughters.

The tradition of dedicating a girl as a Basavi shows a variant in Kurnool. The marriage ceremony is conducted here by tying the girl by means of a flower-garland to a Garudakambha (lampstand). The girl is released either

by her first patron or by her maternal uncle. In a simple feast that follows she is given a *tāli* of black beads.

In another variant the girl is married to a dagger:[63] 'A *Khanjar*, or dagger, is placed on the ground, and the girl, who is to undergo the ceremony, puts a garland thereon. Her mother, then, puts rice of the girl's forehead. The officiating priest next weds the girl to the dagger, as if he was uniting her to a boy in marriage by reciting the marriage-*mantras* while a curtain is held between the girl and the dagger'.

About the Basavis of Bellary district the following information is given:[64] 'A sword with a lime stuck on its point is placed upright beside the novice, and held in her right hand. It represents the bridegroom, who, in the corresponding ceremony of the Hindu marriage sits on the bride's right. A tray, on which are Kalaśa (vessel of water) and a lamp, is then produced and moved thrice in front of the girl. She rises, and, carrying the sword in her right hand places it in the god's sancturary'.

Similar ceremonies were practised by a large number of communities: Tamil castes like Piḷḷais, Veḷḷalas, Mudaliars and Kaikolans, Telugu-speaking castes like Bogam, Sani also known as Kalavantulus, and a number of castes that are connected with temples in Kerala. An account of the contemporaneous practice of dedicating women to the goddess is given below.[65]

Dāsīs of Ellammā

The following conversation was held between one *Ellammādāsī* called Malli and the interviewer, V.C. Nadkarni, (V.C.N.):

Malli: "I was born in Mughalkode village in Karnataka. On the very day that I came into this world, my parents betrothed me to the goddess Yellamma. They believed that by giving away their children to the goddess they would find a place in heaven. (....) This is our tradition—our way to go to heaven. Yellamma is a *jagrat devata* (wakeful deity). You have only to ask for a thing, and she gives it. She cures the sick. She gives children to barren women. Our *vamsa* (family and clan) grows in strength because of her. But we have to give her *dasis* in return. We must propitiate her, for her wrath is terrible. It will bring upon us leprosy—all kinds of misery. Some people give their daughters to Yellamma to fulfil a vow. To beget children, a childless couple would promise to offer her their first-born. Both boys and girls are offered to Yellamma.[66] They are called *jogtis*[67] and can't marry because they are already married to Yellamma. Once a girl is dedicated to the goddess she can be regarded as a boy. She has a share in the family's property like her brothers. She can even perform the funeral rites of her parents. This is one reason why people without sons marry their daughter to Yellamma."

V.C.N.: "But why do parents make their daughters *jogtis*? Surely they know what will become of their children."

Malli: "It's Yellamma's will, besides we are all poor. I am a *jogti* from a Mahar family. We don't even have one cubit of land. The *jogtis* in our family have always been in the same business—they are the only support (....). Parents want us to be in this business...."

V.C.N.: "You said you are married to Yellamma. How is the marriage performed?"

Malli: "When a girl becomes big (i.e. when she attains puberty) she is married to the goddess. The wedding takes place on the full moon of Magh (January-February) or Marghashirsh (November-December). (....). I was married at 16. Before the ceremony I was rubbed with oil and bathed. They gave me perfume and *udi* (scented powder). I was made to wear a crisp green sari, green bangles, a toe-ring and a richly ornamented silver girdle. My aunt, an aged *jogti*, smeared the bridal *bhandara* (turmeric powder) on my forehead and gave me the traditional necklace of black and red beads."

Malli recalls the ride to Yellammā's hill—the place is five miles South-East of Soundatti and a mile North of Urgagol in the Parasgaon taluk of Belgaum. There were large crowds and other young girls like her going in bullock-carts. Troupes of *jogtis* danced before them. Malli continues: "There were many people in the temple. A priest performed the rites. I was asked to garland the idol of Yellamma. An old *jogti* tied the tali (*mangalasutra,* auspicious thread) round my neck and I was pronounced married to the goddess."

V.C.N.: "Are only unmarried girls dedicated to Yellammā ?"

Malli: "Normally, yes. But sometimes widows and girls deserted by their husbands become *jogtis.* Some girls get *jata* (tangled or matted hair). They are sometimes forced to become *jogtis.*

V.C.N.: "Why don't they oil their hair and remove the tangles ?"

Malli: (shaking her head) "If you do such a thing, you are sure to die."

V.C.N.: "What if you are already married?"

Malli: "It makes no difference, you must leave everything behind and be joined to Y llamma. Or else...., the goddess will curse you; you will fall ill and die. Your family will be destroyed."

Jogtis are almost without exception prostitutes. But they are not as Malli says 'professional prostitues'. "Our main vocation is serving Yellamma and we live by *jogwa* (begging)."

V.C.N.: "How do you go about begging after you have been married to Yellamma ?"

Malli: "At the temple where we are married, we are given a *pardy* (wicker basket). In it we carry the images of Paraśurama and Renuka and a string of cowrie shells.[68] The *pardi* is our begging bowl. Every day we have to beg at least at five doors. It is called *jògwa.* On Tuesday and Friday (days sacred to Yellamma) *jogtis* go about begging with their *jag*, a brass pitcher which is the symbol of Yellamma.[69] It also has an image of the goddess with a halo of peacock feathers. The *jag* has to be worshipped every day. The *jag* of Yellamma is handed down from generation to generation and the flame must be kept burning before the *jag.* We call this 'passing on the family light'."

Conclusions

Rites of passage are highly eloquent instruments of culture expressing the production of a 'new meaning'. In the case of the *nityasumaṅgali* we have seen how an 'ordinary' girl transforms into a female of lasting auspiciousness. From where does she derive this auspiciousness?

Traditionally speaking, all women share in the nature of the great goddess (Sakti). In the case of the devadasi this is even precisely specified by Sadyojātaśivācārya.[70] The rites of passage seem to underline this shared nature, and solemnly confirm it. At a closer look we see that all *nityasumaṅgalīs* and even the devadasi-*nityasumaṅgalī* are 'married' first to the goddess or to those objects that can be regarded as her synonyms: the royal staff, the *talaikkōl*, *jarajara*,[71] trident, pot, spear, *kaṭṭāri* and ant-hill. All these objects can be interpreted as synonyms of the goddess or as the *śakti* of the god.[72] The actual 'marriage' ceremony becomes, due to this symbolism, rather a 'merger' with the goddess. In the case of the *mātaṅki*[73] or the *dāsīs* of Ellammā this is an obvious identification, whereas in the case of the courtesan Mātavi and the devadasi-*nityasumaṅgalī* the process evolves in two steps:

(1) only after the human *śakti* has been merged with the universal Sakti (i.e. the great goddess) by a proper ritual, the girl is 'fit' to be dedicated (step 2) to her natural husband: the god residing in the temple. Similary, Sadyojātaśivācārya first identifies the *rudragaṇikā* and *rudrakkaṉṉikai* as derived from the *Kriyāśakti* and *Jñānaśakti* or *Citśakti*. He mentions as one of their *lakṣaṇās* (diagnostic features) their natural feeling of *bhakti* in the shrine of Sakti. Only after describing them as, in fact, one with Sakti, he proceeds to the description of their formal dedication to Siva. The *rudragaṇikā* wears the *liṅga*, whereas the *rudrakkaṉṉikai* wears a *bottu* that is the *ātma* of Siva. If a *rudrakkaṉṉikai* wishes to enter into a sexual relationship with a human man, she should remove Siva's *tāli*, and destroy it as if her husband had died; however, she does not lose her auspiciousness as is the case with 'ordinary' widows.

The rites of passage themselves, and the traditional explanation given to them, all point in the direction of interpreting the *nityasumaṅgalī* not only as a woman whose auspiciousness is *like* that of the great goddess, but as a woman whose auspiciousness is lasting because she *is the goddess*. True to the ambivalent nature of the goddess we encounter *nityasumaṅgalīs* who are like the single, labile seven sisters, like the *dāsīs* of Ellammā and Mathammā (the *mātaṅki* who is both worshipped and feared), and we find *perantulu*-like, benign *nityasumaṅgalīs* who are dedicated to a divine husband, and who live like the goddess Lakṣmī in constant symbiosis with the male principle. The first category of *nityasumaṅgalīs* should be propitiated as they form the human link with and control of the ambivalent in temper of the goddesses; the second category should be attracted for protection and for yielding prosperity, health happiness and good luck, all those generous favours which are characteristic for the goddess Lakṣmī.

The status which the devadasi-*nityasumaṅgalīs* did derive, originally, from this highly sophisticated symbolism, was very high and dignified. However, time and change have corroded the understanding and support of this symbolism from within, and have destroyed the coherence and vitality of this '*sacer ludus*'. As the position of the temple and the court became too

weak to support the validation of this tradition, the devadasi-*nityasumaṅgalīs* were absorbed in the larger category of *nityasumaṅgalīs*. After 1947 some devadasis were fortunate enough to marry, others became professional artists but the majority disappeared into anonymity. However, even now, when one meets some of these anonymous devadasi-*nityasumaṅgalīs*, they do have the dignity of a goddess, who wears a *kāśī poṭṭu*, and for whom the god still has to observe pollution and mourning at the event of her death.

Notes

1. Cf. Amrit Srinivasan, 'The Hindu temple-dancer: prostitute or nun?', in *Cambridge Anthropology*, Vol. 8 No. 1, 1983, p. 73-99.

2. See further p. 187ff.

3. Cf. E. Thurston and K. Rangachari, *Castes and Tribes of Southern India, Vol. V*, p. 59-60, Madras, 1909. The *mēḷakkāraṇ* caste in the Tamil area has two branches:

Tamil speaking ~Vellalas		Telugu speaking ~Telugu Brahmins
Ciṉṉamēḷam dance *mukhavīṇā* players connected castes: Kallans, Vellalans, Akamutaiyans	*Periyamēḷam nāgasvara*-players	*Periyamēḷam nāgasvara* players no dance

Our main informant Smt. P. Raṅganāyaki is the granddaughter of a practising devadasi (Smt. Subburatnammā). Her mother, however, did not serve as a temple-dancer; she was married to a Mudaliar (land-owner caste). Smt. P. Raṅganāyakī was trained by her grandmother and dedicated to the temple at the age of 17; in 1947 she married a Brahmin (Sri Cunnan). Smt. P.R. Thilagam maintains that all her female family members were (and still are) *abhimāṇa manaivis* (wife on the basis of affection) of Brahmins.

4. Cf. Ch. II, p. 117ff.

5. Unfortunately this passage was not quite clear; although we are not able to identify the term *Dhanaśakti* with certainty (perhaps Dhanalakṣmī ?) it seems to bear closest resemblance to the name pronounced by the informant.

6. We would like to stress once more the fact that this study does not aim to give an exhaustive sociological description of the phenomenon. We hope that this task will be completed by other scholars.

7. Cf. Ch. I, p. 15ff.

8. Naccinārkkiniyār's commentary on *Tol. Por.* 90-91.

9. Cf. S. Chatterjee, *Devadasi, Temple-Dancer*, Calcutta, 1945, p. 37.

10. Cf. Ch. I, p. 16

11. Cf. Ch. III, p. 187ff.

12. *Prayōjaṇam* (>Skt. *prayojana*-purpose, aim, opportunity) was the formal occasion to select a partner for the girl. A number of erudite, sophisticated art-lovers would be invited as well as eventual patrons. A patron should be a man of good status, preferably an aristocratic landlord of good taste and tradition, rather young and good-looking and sufficiently rich to maintain the dancer. The girl's opinion was consulted in accepting an

offer. Usually an initial period of maintenanee was agreed upon. Some devadasis remained with a single patron for their entire life.

13. Cf. also S. Chatterjee, *Devadasi, Temple-Dancer*, Caleutta, 1945, p. 32-33. Also, M. Chandra, *The World of Courtesans*, New Delhi,' 73; L. Sternbaeh, Legal Position of Prostitutes according to Kautilya Arthaśastra, *J.A.O.S.*, Vol. 71, 1951, pp. 25-60; S.C. Upadhyaya, *Vatsyayana's Kama Sutra*, Bombay, 19; Dev Raj, *L'esclavage dans l'Inde ancienne d'après les textes Palis et Sanskrits*, Publ. de l'institut Français d'Indologie, No. 7, Pondiehéry, 1957.

14. *Tēvāram, Tiruvārūr Paravaiyumaṇṭali.*

15. *Periyapurāṇam, Cuntaramūrttināyaṇār purāṇam.*

16. Cf. Ch. I., p. 22ff.

17. Cf. Ch. I., p. 41ff.

18. Smt. P.R. Thilagam eonsiders her *paramparai* (line of succession), the *koṇṭi vīṭu paramparai*, to belong to the eategory of *patiyilār.*

19. The account of Smt. P.R. Thilagam seems to be very elose to the enumeration given by S. Chatterjee, *op. cit.* p. 32-33, and of a more general nature.

20. Cf. Ch. II, p. 119 and n. 95.

21. Cf. Mohan Khokar, *Proceedings of the Seventh South Indian Natyakala Conference*, 27.12, 1953-2.1, 1954, p. 29-38: 'Bharata Natya in Baroda', p. 33: 'Almost immediately after his accession to the throne of Baroda in 1875 the Maharaja Sayajirao instituted the Kalavant Khatha whieh was the State Department of Artistes. The organisation was responsible for employment and maintenanee of artistes, and it also framed the rules of work, eode of discipline, ete. This Department lasted till the merger of State with Bombay about fifty years ago. Rules governing the services of the Bharata Natya dancers and supporting musieians, as indeed of all artistes employed in the State service, were fixed and recorded in print. The Bharata Natya daneing girls, that is, Gowri and Kanthimathi were paid jointly Rs. 433 per mensem. Their accompanying musieians were paid in all Rs. 272 per month. Later on, dearness allowance was also added to these basie salaries. It deserves to be noted that the Bharata Natya daneers and musieians were paid salaries higher than those of all the other artistes. The dancers were responsible for their troupe. They had to look after the behaviour, eleanliness, effieieney and sueh other matters pertaining to their musicians. The dancers had to provide themselves with their own costumes. Eaeh daneer had always to have in good eondition the following equipment: a saree adorned with ribbons of brocade, a bodice or eholi, a pair of pyjamas, a dupatta or covering for the upper body, a decorated apron or cloth-piece falling in front of the legs upto the knees, and a set of ankle-bells. Periodieal eheck-ups by the Superintendent of the Kalavant Katha ensured that the daneers did keep their array in good order'.

22. We would like to deseribe the soeial identity of the devadasi as a 'ritual specialist'; only in the second place she can be ealled an artist or courtesan.

23. The modus (*dharma*) of life that follows caste and order (*varṇa*) and the evolvement of human life in four stages: that of the student, the householder, the anchorite and, finally, that of the abandoner of all worldly concerns.

24. Cf. Ch. I, p. 6 and n. 22.

25. Cf. Brenda E.F. Beck, 'Colour and heat in south Indian ritual', *Man* vol. 4,no. 4, December, 1969, p. 553-572, especially the Appendix on heating and eooling properties of fruits, vegetables, grains, meats, flowers and leaves in Coimbatore Distriet, Madras.

26. The unattraetiveness of Siva as a partner is well-illustrated by the *pada* '*Ettai kantu*' (*rāga kalyāṇi, tāla rūpaka*) in whieh a mother ridieules her daughter for falling in love with Siva. Full of irony she asks the girl. "What do you see in that madman (*paittiyakāraṇ*)? He wears the Gaṅgā in his head, danees with the *bhūtas*. He has no fine elothes, but rags, he rides on a bull" (suggesting a comparison with the beautiful god Vishnu who rides on the elegant bird Garuda, or, the attractive god Murukaṇ, who represents youthful splendour and who rides the peaeoek). She eontinues moekingly: "Do you expect an inheritanee

of your parents-in-law (who are unknown); are you attracted by the crescent moon in his hair, or his fiery third eye that burnt Kāma (the god of love)? He swallowed poison that got stuck in his throat (which is still blue as a result). He kicked Yama: are you drawn by that same foot? His make-up is ashes smeared on his body, how can you love him, my daughter?"

27. The harmonious union of the male and female principle is considered of basic, universal and eternal importance. This 'axiom' is expressed in the mantra "*Śivaśaktivihīnaḥ śavaḥ*": Siva without Sakti is a corpse.

28. We have not been able to identify these *tālas*.

29. Lit. five syllables: *Na-mah Śi-vā-ya* ('Honour to Siva').

30. Ṣaḍāsana might indicate the god Murukaṉ fostered by the six Kṛttikās in the Śaravaṇa lake.

31. Cf. further Ch. III, p. 196ff.

32. Cf. Ch. II., p. 109-10.

33. Lit. 'circumambulatory of wish'; none of the informants could explain this term.

34. The sprinkling of water is considered a *panacea* against all instances of 'excess heat'.

35. It is not clear whether this *rudradāsī* differs from the *rudradāsī* mentioned above. As both are derived from different aspects of the goddess, we presume that the two are not identical.

36. Cf. Ch. II., p. 109-10.

37. Cf. this *bottu* of 'livelihood' with the *bottu* of the *rudrakkaṉṉikai* which is the *ātma* (life-principle) of Siva.

38. Satcittumbara: perhaps *saccit* (pure existence and thought or name of Brahmā) and (*t*)*umbara* (name of a Gandharva)?

39. Probably indicating Mahāviṣṇu.

40. This passage ends with the words: *Śakti sṛṣṭikai coṉṉōm*: 'We have spoken about the sprouting of Sakti'.

41. At this first performance Smt. P. Raṅganāyakī danced: *tisra alārippū*, *Sarasicākṣulu śabdam* (*rāga: rāgamālika, tāla: miśra cāpu*), *kalyāṇi jatisvaram* (*tāla: rūpaka*), '*Samini' varṇam* (*rāga: kamās, tāla: āti*, composer Ponniah Piḷḷai), *padas: Mañci dinamu* (*tāla: miśra cāpu*) and *Mathura nagarilo* (*tāla: āti*) both in *rāga*: *ānandabhairavi* and composed by Kṣetrayyā, *kāpi tillānā* (*tāla: āti*).

42. Cf. Ch. I, p. 27.

43. It would take about three days before the wound would heal. Tradition holds that those girls who offered themselves in a non-virginal state would suffer terrible pains, and the wound would not heal.

44. Rambhā is one of the heavenly courtesans in the palace of Indra; her skills are the *artes amoris*.

45. *Kaintarvyam*, probably derived from the Gandharvas, heavenly artists.

46. Another symbol for the goddess Lakṣmī.

47. Smt. Subburatnammā was able to write down her entire repertoire in Telugu script. The manuscript contains songs and dances in Telugu, Tamil and Sanskrit.

48. Lit. eight syllables: *ōṃ Nā-rā-ya-nā-ya-na-maḥ* ('Honour to Narayana').

49. Smt. Sarasvatī Ammā was dedicated to the Narasiṃha Perumāḷ temple in Bangalore. She was trained in dance. Nowadays she lives with her family in Madras.

50. We have not included in the main text the accounts of two devadasis from Mysore State, since we decided earlier to consider only those devadasis who belong to the Tamil-speaking area. However, the nature of their information is so valuable that we give their accounts here. Smt. Veṅkaṭalaksammā, adopted daughter of the palace dancer Smt. Jeṭṭi Tāyammā (daughter of the wrestler Śrī Dāsappā): Smt. Venkaṭalaksammā heard the following information from her guru; even her guru did only witness this as a child, but was too young to go through the ceremonies herself. When she came of age, the tradition of dedication had been abolished. "At the commencement of the training in dance, the *sādhaka pūjā* was held in the house of the guru. The pupil would be between 5 and 7 years old. She

would have to bring a new set of pyjama, blouse and half sāri; articles for the worship of the *kuladevatā* (family gods). The floor would have to be cleaned, and five shares of paddy would be spread out, drawn in a shape of a *svastika*. A white cloth would be spread over the paddy. The guru would lead the child to the white cloth, place her on it and make her perform five dance-steps. After this a threefold *pradakṣiṇa* would be made, and a prostration for the *guru*. At the close of this function the guru received one third of the total of his tuition fee, and sweets would be distributed to those present.

The second stage in the training was marked by a function called *ōṭikai* (held when the pupil was between 7 and 9 years old). For this *pūjā* the worship would concern first the musical instruments that accompany the dancer. This would be the first occasion for the girl to dance with musical accompaniment. Only in the following *pūjā*, the *gajjai pūjā*, she would be given her ankle-bells. The *gajjai pūjā* had a two-fold purpose: on the one hand it qualified the pupil as a mature artist, and on the other, it introduced her into the life of either a secular, professional artist, or to the dedication as a temple dancer.

The second account was given by Smt. Jejammā (*1896) in 1978. She was dedicated as devadasi to the Siva temple in Muhur. Her family tradition is a longstanding one. She did not accept the opinion that girls who were not born from devadasi mothers could ever be considered devadasis 'proper'.

According to her tradition, the training in dance was started in the fifth year; this function was called *sādhaka-pūjā*. This *pūjā* was followed by *Ōṇam pūjā* (*Ōṇam* is the constellation *Alpha Orionis*). Hereafter, dance, music, languages and several other accomplishments would be taught. After completing the set of basic steps and the first composition, called *alārippū*, another *pūjā* was arranged: *alārippū pūjā*. This would allow the girl to learn the more complicated compositions. When she would have mastered the full concert-repertoire, the *gajjai pūjā* would be performed. This *pūjā* serves in the Muhur tradition as well as the formal entry of the girl into the temple. The wedding-*cum*-dedication function is performed with the assistance of five women who have themselves undergone the *gajjai-pūjā*. Only if this number of devadasis cannot be assembled, other 'ordinary' *sumaṅgalīs* may participate. A gathering of learned, respectable people of good status would be arranged, and the girl would be brought in their midst. The *gajjai* would be placed on a plate with jaggery; this plate would be taken round the assembly and all those elders and *sumaṅgalīs* present would touch the plate, thereby blessing it. Hereafter the girl would be taken to the temple, accompanied by all musical instruments. The temple deity should be the *kuladēvatā* of the girl. She would carry the *gajjai* and other symbols herself. After the plate and its contents had been offered to the feet of the deity and worshipped thus, it was placed back into the hands of the girl. The procession would now return homewards. There, the *gajjai* would be tied around the ankles of the girl by one of the five women. Only women should tie the *gajjai*. Only in absolute lack of women, the *guru* could perform this ritual. Wearing her *gajjai*, the girl would make a *pradakṣiṇa* around the musical instruments with the steps *tey, tey dat ta* (*poy-aṭavu*). Having completed this *pradakṣiṇa* she would be given a plate, and while *puṣpāñjali* ślokas would be recited, she would take the plate around among the guests and receive auspicious presents. Whatever she would receive, would have to be given to the guru. He would decide what he would return to her. According to Sri R. Sathyanarayana who was kind enough to be present at the interview, this function resembles closely the rituals connected with the bestowal of the sacred thread on a young Brahmin boy. Smt. Jejammā was emphatic about the fact that no one in her tradition ever received a *tāli* or toe-rings. "All these things are fanciful and modern. Our status is our *gajjai*."

51. Smt. Veṅkaṭalakṣammā stated that the corpse of a devadasi was covered with a turmeric cloth. All materials that are necessary for her funeral are provided by the temple. The worship is stopped the moment that the death of the devadasi is announced. She is burnt with her *tāli*. Hereafter worship is resumed with the offering of *mahānaivedya*.

52. Cf. Ch. I, p. 50ff.

53. Cf. Ch. I, p. 55.

54. Cf. Ch. I, p. 55 and p. 14-5 and n. 61.

55. Cf. W. Th. Elmore, *op. cit.*, p. 37: 'The story-teller disguises himself by dressing as a woman, for he has no desire to be recognized later by any of the other deities as the one who did honor to the Sakti'.

56. Cf. Ch. I, p. 64 .

57. Cf. Ch. I, p. 55ff.

58. Cf. Sadyojātasivācārya's commentary on *Kāmikāgama.*

59. *Śakti sṛṣṭikai coṉṉōm*, cf. Conclusion, p.

60. Cf. esp. E. Thurston and K. Rangachari, *Castes and Tribes of Southern India*, Madras, 1909; H. Whitehead, *The Village Gods of South India*, Madras, 1921; the various state manuals and gazetteers. S. Chatterjee, *op. cit.*, p. 29-72 gives a fairly rich survey of the ethnographic reports of the last century.

61. Cf. S. Chatterjee, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

62. Cf. S. Chatterjee, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

63. Cf. S. Chatterjee, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

64. Cf. S. Chatterjee, *op. cit.*, p. 58-9.

65. Cf. *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, Vol. XCVI 50, December 14-20, 1975, 'Devadasis-Married to God and Mammon', p. 8-15.

66. The boys are dressed like women, and treated as such. It is not clear whether all boys are transformed into eunuchs or only a number of them.

67. Both are considered to be *yogins.*

68. Cf. Ch. I, p. 55.

69. The ever-recurring motif of the pot (*kumbha*) as synonym of the goddess.

70. Cf. Ch. III, p. 180.

71. Cf. Ch. I, p. 55.

72. The spear (*vēl*) of Murukaṉ is generally interpreted as his *śakti.* The *kaṭṭāri* that was brought by the elderly ladies from Tiruttani temple, was received from the *mūrti* 'Vēlāyudha', Murukaṉ whose weapon is the spear.

73. Cf. Ch. I, p. 55ff. on the procedure of selecting a *mātaṅki.*

CONCLUSION

As the worlds mightily clash
And crash in resounding thunder,
As blood-dripping demon-spirits
Sing in glee amid the general ruin,
To the beat and the tune
Leapst thou, Mother, in dance ecstatic
Dread Mahakali !
Chamundi ! Gangali !
Mother, Mother,
Thou hast drawn me
To see thee dance !.....

When Time and the three worlds
Have been cast in a ruinous heap,
When the frenzy has ceased
And a lone splendour has wakened,
Then auspicious Siva appears
To quench thy terrible thirst.
Now thou smilest and treadst with him
The blissful Dance of Life !

S. Bharati[1]

The concept of the ambivalent Divine that is eternal, omnipresent, expressing itself incessantly in the dynamic tension of creation and destruction, of balance and imbalance, of auspicious and inauspicious, gave rise to the need for efficient specialists who could control any critical accumulation or eruption of dynamic force. This need is expressed throughout the history of South India and in all layers of its culture.

In the earliest period accessible to us, we find this divine force referred to as *aṇaṅku* which can be understood as an awe-inspiring, fear-provoking, oppressive power.[2] In later times we are confronted with complementary oppositions like 'auspicious-inauspicious', 'heating-cooling', 'pure-impure', augmentation and merit (*puṇya*) versus evil, jealous eye that consumes everything (*dṛṣṭi*). Throughout history, the ambivalent dynamism of the Divine has been felt, and although man could not construct an exact pattern of dynamic change, he distinguished diagnostic features (*lakṣaṇās*) of the two basic forces, and sought to regulate their cause and effect for the benefit of mankind. This was attempted by various means: regular communication through Agamic worship, occasional propitiation as in the sacrifices performed in the villages, sustenance of the living proofs of prosperity and vita-

lity by attending on the king, and ubiquitous preventive or propitiating measures taken at every step, and in important events.[3] From the 'lowest' and most unsophisticated *focus* of South Indian culture up to the 'highest' and most refined *focus* of sophisticated court-culture, we encounter this concept of the ambivalent, dynamic Divine, and the attempt to control it.

The basic opposition which causes this dynamism is the tension between the dynamic, female principle (Sakti) and the inert, abstract male principle (Siva).[4] The dynamic principle can be both destructive and protective. An excess of dynamism destroys, whereas it creates, nourishes and protects when properly harmonised with the male principle. This idea is expressed in the various characteristic types of goddesses: the single, ascetic goddess is labile and dangerous, whereas the married goddess is the prototype of benign, fertile protection. Both form, however, part of the great goddess (Sakti).

As the sudden eruption of dynamism was related to the temper of the goddess, a method was devised to control this danger *from within:* a female ritualist was created, whose female power (*śakti*) was ritually merged with that of the great goddess (Sakti). She should be ever-benign and protective of her fellow human beings. The traditional view holds that all women share, by their very nature, the power of the goddess. A regular progress is imagined in the degrees of auspiciousness of varying status of women: at the top of the scale is the married woman whose husband is alive and who has borne several children; she is called *su-maṅgalī* 'auspicious female'. At the lowest rung of the ladder is the widow who is considered highly inauspicious.[5] As a ritual person, the devadasi exceeds even the *su-maṅgalī* in auspiciousness. Firstly, because her individual female powers are ritually merged with those of the goddess,[6] and secondly, because she is dedicated to a divine husband, i.e., a husband who can *never die*.[7] In consequence, she can never lose her (double) auspiciousness and is therefore called *nitya-su-maṅgalī*, the 'ever-auspicious-female'. According to the Agamic tradition devadasis (i.e , the *rudraganikā, rudrakkaṉṉikai* and others) are derived from *Citśakti*.[8] They should be employed and protected by the temple because they bring luck, protect the king and the country; in short, they are said to be the 'sprouting of Sakti' (*Śakti sṛṣṭikai coṉṉōm*). Their most important tasks are to wave the pot-lamp (*pūrṇakumbhadīpa*), to perform *liṅgalayam* (re-absorption of the *liṅga*) and to spread auspiciousness by their dance (*nṛttaṉam*).[9] However, an excess of *rudrakkaṉṉikais,* whether they are employed out of lust or otherwise, is considered dangerous: it creates 'heat in the king, burns up the kingdom and causes *bhūta-loka* to come into existence.[10]

The presence and actions of the *nityasumaṅgalī* were obviously believed to be very concretely efficacious. For this reason we find various types of *nityasumaṅgalīs* throughout South Indian culture. In analogy with the manifold manifestations of the goddess, we encounter different types of *nityasumaṅgalīs*. The respect or fear in which the public holds these ritual women depends on their association with a particular type of goddess.[11]

Their special power is considered analogous, too, with that of the goddess. The ritual women associated with the ambivalent, dangerous goddesses are rather feared than anything else. However, their presence is of vital importance.[12] The merger with the benign, peaceful goddess lends the devadasi-*nityasumaṅgalīs* the power of protection against danger, of support of prosperity, health, fertility and happiness.

The *raison d'être* of the devadasi-*nityasumaṅgalī* is twofold: on the one hand she should protect against danger (which can be summarised as 'excess heat')[13] and, on the other hand, instill dynamism into the processes of gaining a livelihood, maintaining splendour, preserving good health, obtaining children and securing marital happiness. To achieve this twofold aim, she makes use of several implements like the pot (*kumbha*), light (*dīpa*), coloured water (*āḷam*), *mañcal*, limes, black beads, flowers, coconuts and a number of preparations that belong to the professional secrets of the devadasis.[14] The waving of lights, especially of the pot-lamp, can be considered the most characteristic task of the devadasi-*nityasumaṅgalī*.[15] Her beauty, jewellery and artistic accomplishments are only marginally connected with her propitiatory function. Those compositions which can be performed only in a strictly *maṭi* (ritually pure) setting by an initiated and ritually clean dancer belong to this category. They can be distinguished by certain diagnostic dance-syllables[16] and are generally speaking not aesthetic. Examples of this type of ritual compositions are *puṣpāñjali*, *pañcamūrti* and *navasandhi kautvams*.[17] The pleasant, aesthetic and artistic elements of the devadasi tradition serve in general the second aim, namely, that of instilling prosperity and other auspicious *desiderata*. The repertoire of the devadasis suits all ritual occasions that should bring about one of these wishes. Compositions like *maṅgalas* intend to create an undisturbed auspiciousness.[18] Songs like *lāli*, *ūñjal* and *ōṭam* are closely connected with swing-ceremonies and weddings, etc. which aim at fertile, conjugal happiness. The 'joke'-songs, *nalaṅku* and slightly obscene songs form an integral part of all weddings, of both gods and men. In dealing with 'excess heat', excessive sexual heat also belongs to this category. The association of devadasis with the field of erotic experience cannot be denied, but to mark them 'sacred prostitutes' or 'goddesses of fertility' seems vastly exaggerated to me. The task of the devadasi can be rather seen as controlling or instilling where necessary. Some of the erotic compositions, both straightforward and romantic, can be understood from this twofold involvement in this field of human experience. Her traditional role as Kāma in the *Kāmaṇ kūttu* during the *Vasantotsava*[19] is the only instance of the devadasi's direct association with Eros.

The use of performing arts, beauty and refined jewellery is mostly connected with the devadasi-*nityasumaṅgalī* who functioned within the structure of rich Agamic temples, or within the rituals performed at the court. The degree of artistic sophistication decreases as the *nityasumaṅgalī* is farther removed from the temple and the court. The element of propitiation becomes more pronounced as we move closer to the ambivalent, dangerous goddesses

that are found in the villages. The performing arts that are connected with the village cults are, usually, of a crude level. Festivals are celebrated with loud drumming, blowing of horns, story telling, possessed dancing, hook-swinging (which is now forbidden) and walking on burning cinders.[20]

Within the broad scale of *nityasumaṅgalīs* found in South Indian culture there are vast differences as to their ritual character, sophistication and respect which the public pays them. Structurally, however, they are related, expressing different extremes of the meaning of one concept: that of the human impersonation of the great goddess (*Sakti*). *Graph* 20 shows the diffusion and variation of this phenomenon.

In conclusion we would like to suggest that the *nityasumaṅgalī* is a *multivalent concept* that has existed throughout recorded history of South India and its entire culture. This concept is larger than the devadasi 'proper'[21] who is a *type* of *nityasumaṅgalī*, functioning within the structure of Agamic temple ritual and in the rituals for the king. Even though the tradition of the devadasi-*nityasumaṅgalīs* has lost its socioeconomic base, the concept (and thus the need of *nityasumaṅgalīs*) is still very much alive.

	village, village cults	Agamic temple	court, town, patron
marriage	pot, sword, lamp, tree	trident, *kaṭṭāri*, goddess	goddess, (trident ?) *talaikkōl*
dedication	human partners	idol of god	king, 'aristocratic' patron
ritual tasks	*āḷam*	*kumbhārati, puṣpāñjali*	*āḷam; kumbhārati*
	procession	*liṅga layam*	procession
	soothsaying	*utsavas*	*rājopacaras*
	abuse; spitting	*rājopacaras*	
type of performing arts	*karakam*	*puṣpāñjali nṛtta/*	*kaccēri* (music/dance)
	villuppāṭṭu	←*kautvam*	social compositions
	rope-dancing	←*eccarikai, etc.*→	(*maṅgala, ūñjal, lāli, ōṭam, nalaṅku*, etc.)
	tēyyam and *bhūta* dances	←*sarva vādyam*→	
	frenzied dance	*catir kaccēri*→	
	possession	social compositions→	
	←*kuṟavañci-nāṭakam-prabandham*→		
type of nityasumaṅgali	rudradāsī	*devadāsī, patiyilār,*	*rājadāsī*
	grāmakkaṇṇikai	*koṇṭi vīṭu dāsī*	*devadāsī*
	grāmadāsī	*rudragaṇikā*	*rājagaṇikā*
	basavi	*rudrakkaṇṇikai*	*māṇikkam*
	Ellammādāsī	*rudradāsī*	
	mātaṅki	*māṇikkam*	

Graph 20

It is precisely the multivalence of this concept in the Hindu cultural consciousness which has contributed to the enigmatic character of the devadasi tradition. On the one hand, the devadasi-*nityasumaṅgalī* is transformed into a *synonym* of the auspicious goddess but, on the other hand, she shares with other *nityasumaṅgalīs* the frequent, direct exposure to the dangerous, uncanny and oppressive Divine, which makes her unpopular.[22]

The *anti-nautch, anti-devadasi* movement succeeded in desstroying the most prominent and refined class of *nityasumaṅgalīs*. It did not destroy, however, the basic cultural motivation. What has remained, nowadays, are on one side of the scale the more crude variants of the concept,[23] and, on the other extreme, a highly skilled professional group without proper platform, and an art that is scattered and mutilated by the demands of modern publicity. In this context we cannot but repeat the words of the late Smt. T. Balasarasvati which have a bearing not only on the art of dance but on the entire devadasi *sampradāya*, and its place in the Hindu tradition:

> "The greatest authorities on the dance have definitely recognised that it is the orthodoxy of traditional discipline which gives the fullest freedom to the individual creativity of the artist (....) The young will recognise the greatness of this art if they study it with intense participation, calmly and without haste (....).
> This is my prayer."[24]

Notes

1. Cf. K.V. Zvelebil, *The Smile of Murugaṇ*, Leiden, 1973, p. 314-5.
2. Cf. Ch. I, p. 6ff. for the gradual exposition of the concept of *aṇaṅku*.
3. Anyone who has lived in a Hindu household will be struck by the amount of prescribed and proscribed deeds, words, food-stuffs, and 'cosmetics' that regulate the daily life. Their number increases in festival times, or at *saṃskāras* (rites of passage). As an example from ritual literature one might quote the *Kumāratantra*,Ch.XXXX onthe *Skandotsavavidhi*: the merits and demerits of certain textiles, and colours for the flag are discussed in great length, the materials for the flagpole, its length, etc. before the actual instructions for the celebration of the festival are even hinted at.
4. This basic 'axiom' is expressed in the mantra *Śivaśaktividhinaḥ śavaḥ* : Śiva without Śakti is a corpse.
5. Cf. Holly Baker Reynolds, 'The Auspicious Married Woman', in *The Powers of Tamil Women*, Susan S. Wadley, editor, Syraceuse University, 1980, p. 36, in a scheme of values the author distinguishes the following degrees of auspiciousness:" 1. Virgin, unmarried female (*kaṇṇi*): capricious power; usually auspicious; homologized in life and after death to female divinities called *ammaṉ*-s ("lady"). 2. Unmarried mother: potentially malevolent; inauspicious; may become a wandering ghost at death and impede the prosperity of others. 3. Married woman, (*cumaṅkali*): benevolent; most auspicious; while living and after death viewed as benevolent great goddess such as *Lakṣmī*; continues to bless family with prosperity after death. 4. Barren woman (*mālati*): potentially malevolent; inauspicious; while living and after death may impede the fertility of all spheres of reality. 5. Woman who dies during childbirth or pregnancy: potentially malevolent; inauspicious;

may impede the deliveries of pregnant women; *cumaitāṅki*-burden rest-erected near roadside to ease her burden by easing the burden of travelers and to assuage her need for vengeance. 6. Widow (*viṭavai*): capricious power; "the most inauspicious of all inauspicious things."

6. Cf. Ch. III, p. 180, and p. 181-2, p. 187-8

7. Cf. Ch. III, p. 186, p. 189

8. Cf. Sanjukta Gupta, in *Hindu Tantrism*, Leiden/Koln, 1979, p. 172, '*Kuṇḍalinī* is the consciousness (*cit-śakti*) which, as a result of the evolutionary process of creation, becomes limited as *jīva* (a living being). After having created the grossest of all basic elements-the solid (*pṛthivī*, i.e., the earth)-this cit-śakti ceases to function as it were, because from then on the created universe functions almost automatically. Hence it is conceived that Kuṇḍalinī, encased in each individual being, just goes to sleep. As soon as this power is aroused from her slumber, she proceeds to revert to her real existence as undifferentiated from the ultimate Reality. She is called Kuṇḍalinī, as she is visualized as a coiled snake inside the lowest cakra, *mūlādhāra*. Since cit-śakti is identified with the Goddess, the Cosmic Woman, Kuṇḍalinī is referred to as feminine.

9. Cf. Ch. II, p. 118

10. Cf. Ch. III, p. 186

11. Cf. Ch. III, p. 193ff

12. Cf. Ch. I, p. 55ff

13. The capacity of the *nityasumaṅgalī* to deal with this 'excess heat' is considered indispensable but also dangerous and to be avoided when not strictly necessary.

14. In a famous *padam* '*Pataṟi varukutu*' (*rāga kambhōji*, *tāla rūpaka*, composer Ghanam Krishna Aiyar), the second line of the *caraṇa* says that *Śrī* Murukaṉ will cover the love-lorn girl with *māyappoṭi* 'magic powder'. According to one informant, the term *māyappoṭi* refers also to aphrodisiacs that were mixed in to drinks served to guests.
Cf. for the first type of 'implements' Ch. I, p. 55

15. Cf. Ch. II, p. 119 The ritual of *kumbhārati* was quoted by all informants. Even those devadasis whose artistic heritage disintegrated, remembered the task of waving the pot-lamp. In other instances we find that the temple did no longer employ the artistic talents and skills of the devadasis but only required them to wave the pot-lamp in *utsava* times (and during the *Cāyaraṭcai pūjā* of the daily ritual).

16. Cf. Ch. II, p. 156ff.

17. Cf. Ch. II, p. 151-2.

18. *Maṅgalas* are often sung during the celebration of *saṃskāras* (rites of passage) in private houses.

19. Cf. Ch. II, p. 132, here the term *Vasantotsava* ('spring festival') indicates a one day festival within the structure of a large festival (*Brahmotsava*).

20. Cf. W. Th. Elmore, *op. cit.*, p. 13-17; his description of the festival for the goddess Polerammā is but one example of the general festivities that accompany the worship of the village gods.

21. In Chapter II we defined the devadasi 'proper' as well as her tasks in daily and festival ritual.

22. Cf. also D.D. Shulman, *Tamil Temple Myths*, Princeton University Press, 1980, p. 347-352 (Conclusions): "Two themes have persistently engaged our attention in our progress through the myths of Tamil shrines-the search for power and all that power can bring; and the attempt to make this search subservient to an ideal of purity. Power is believed to be derived from forces that are, in their very essence contaminating (...)". "In all these myths the underlying goal is sacred power, the power that can give life and material prosperity. But this power, in order to be useful for man, must be limited and channelled into proper courses. Limited in this way, power becomes auspicious and accessible." However, we do not fully agree with the introduction of notions like "evil" and "chaos": "In Tamil myth, as in Hindu thought generally, the creative processes of the

universe are bound up with evil." (...) "Life is won only out of the darkness and violence of chaos." We rather believe that, that which we (Westerners) would call evil or chaos represents the very, dynamic (i.e., full of contrast and tension) nature of *prakṛti* (evoluted, conditioned Being) which can be transformed (back) into *puruṣa*, or *nirguṇa Brahman* (concentrated, unconditioned Being) by exhausting its own mode of being; in order words *prakṛti*, manifest, evoluted nature, can return to its own source only by overcoming its stage of evolution, seemingly destroying it thereby. Terms like 'destruction', 'evil', 'murder', etc. should perhaps rather be understood as the process of *transformation* which operates in two directions: from the unconditioned, involuted *modus* of Being into the conditioned, evoluted *modus* of Being, and *vice versa*. Or, in Indian terms from *puruṣa* (essence, 'pure spirit') to *prakṛti* (born nature, procreation), and from this evoluted world in which we experience *nāma* (name) and *rūpa* (form) -and thereby conflict, tension and suffering-back into the eternal, undivided source (*mahābindu*, or, *nirguṇa Brahman*). Such a process seems indicated, too, by the notions of *sṛṣṭi* (evolution) and *pralaya* (re-absorption) as discussed in Ch. II, p. 89ff as well as man's effort to re-unite (*yuj*-) himself with his own source through *yoga* (see Ch. II, p. 94-6).

23. Cf. Conclusion, p. 206, Graph. 20-village and village cults.

24. Cf. T. Balasarasvati, 'Bharata Natyam', in *Mārg* Vol. XXIV No. 3, p. 37-45, and 'Reflections', in Quarterly of *National Centre of Performing Arts*, jubilee issue, 1972-82, Bombay, 1982, p. 6-14.

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— Smt. T. Balasarasvatī, dancer, Madras (Tanjore)
— Smt. Cāyimātā Civapiruntatēvi, dancer, Pudukkottai
— Śrī S. Celvagaṇapati, *nāgasvara* player, Tiruvarur
— Śrī K. Gaṇeśaṉ, *naṭṭuvaṉār*, Madras
— Śrī Gaṇeśaṉ, *gurukkaḷ*, Madurai
— Smt. Jejammā, dancer, Mysore (Muhur)
— Śrī S. Letchappa, *nāgasvara* player, Madras (Tiruvarur)
— Śrī Naṭarājasundara Piḷḷai, *nāgasvara* player, Tiruvarur
— Śrī V. Naṭeśa, *nāgasvara* player, Tiruvarur
— Smt. B.N. Rājalakṣmi, singer, Madras (Bangalore)
— Smt. P. Raṅganāyakī Cunnan, dancer, Madras (Tiruttani)
— Śrī T. Sankaran, *mēḷakkāraṉ* music and dance expert, grandson of Smt. T. Vīṇā Dhanammāī, Madras (Tanjore)
— Smt. Sarasvatī Ammā, singer, Madras
— Smt. P.R. Thilagam, professor of music, dance-teacher, Tanjore; still performing in *rathotsava* in Tiruvarur.
— Śrī Tirunāvukkaracar, son of devadasi mother, Karaikkudi.
— Śrī V.S. Tyāgarāja Mutaliār, trustee of Tyagarajasvami temple, Tiruvarur.
— Smt. Veṅkaṭalaksmmā, dancer, Madras.

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INDEX

This index attempts to follow the interdisciplinary character of the present study by discerning the following topics: I. Methodology, II. Texts and Authors, III. Gods, Temples, Rituals and Ritualists, IV. Arts, Artists and Artistic Conventions, V. *Nityasumaṅgalī*: this topic has been subdivided into: V.1. Types of *Nityasumaṅgalīs*, V.2. Rôle of *Nityasumaṅgalīs*, V.3. Cultural concepts related to the *Nityasumaṅgalī*. The entries have been arranged according to the order of the English alphabet; unfortunately, it has proven necessary to supply several variations in transcription.

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